A DROP in the OCEAN

HOANG VAN HOAN'S REVOLUTIONARY REMINISCENCES

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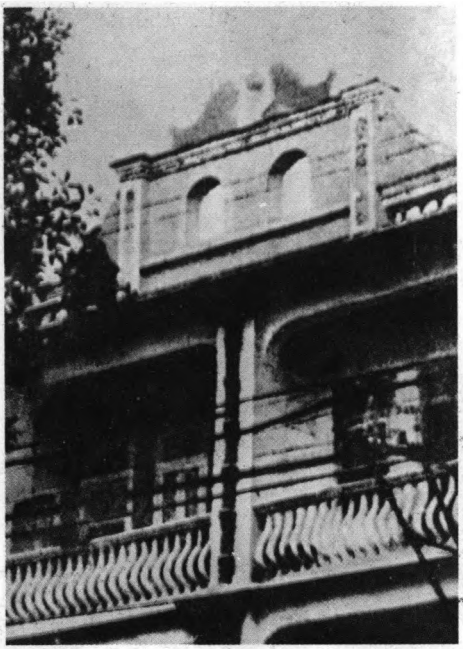
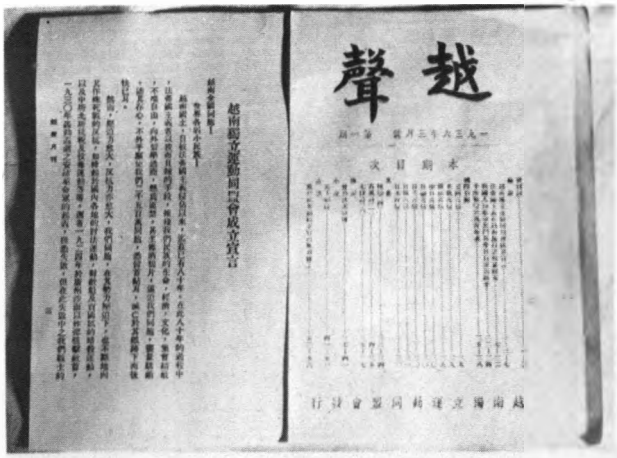
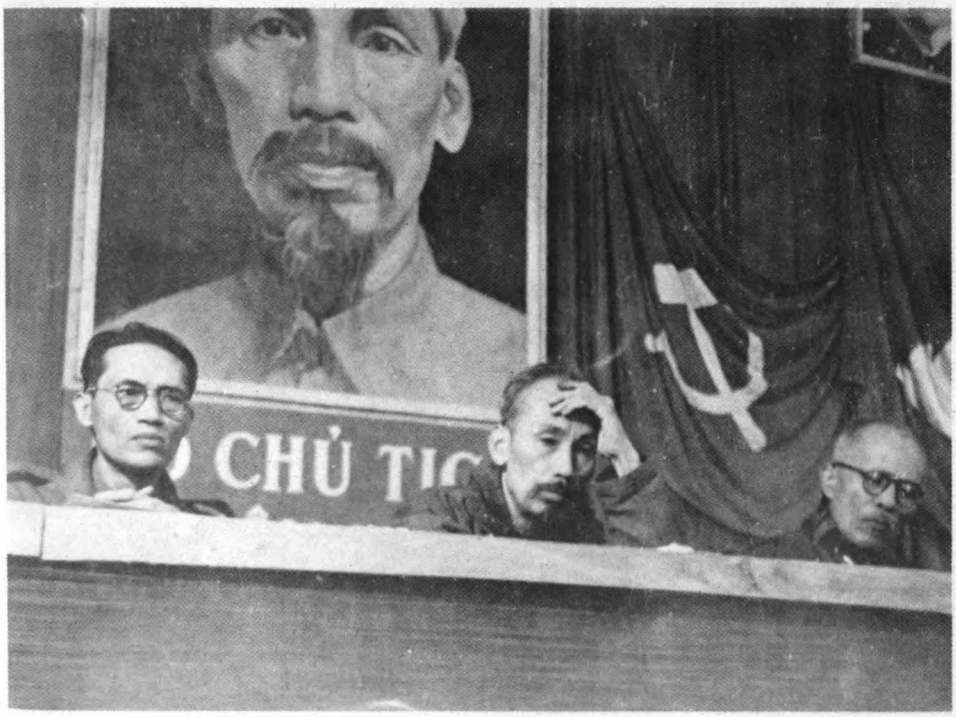


Former site of the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades in Guangzhou

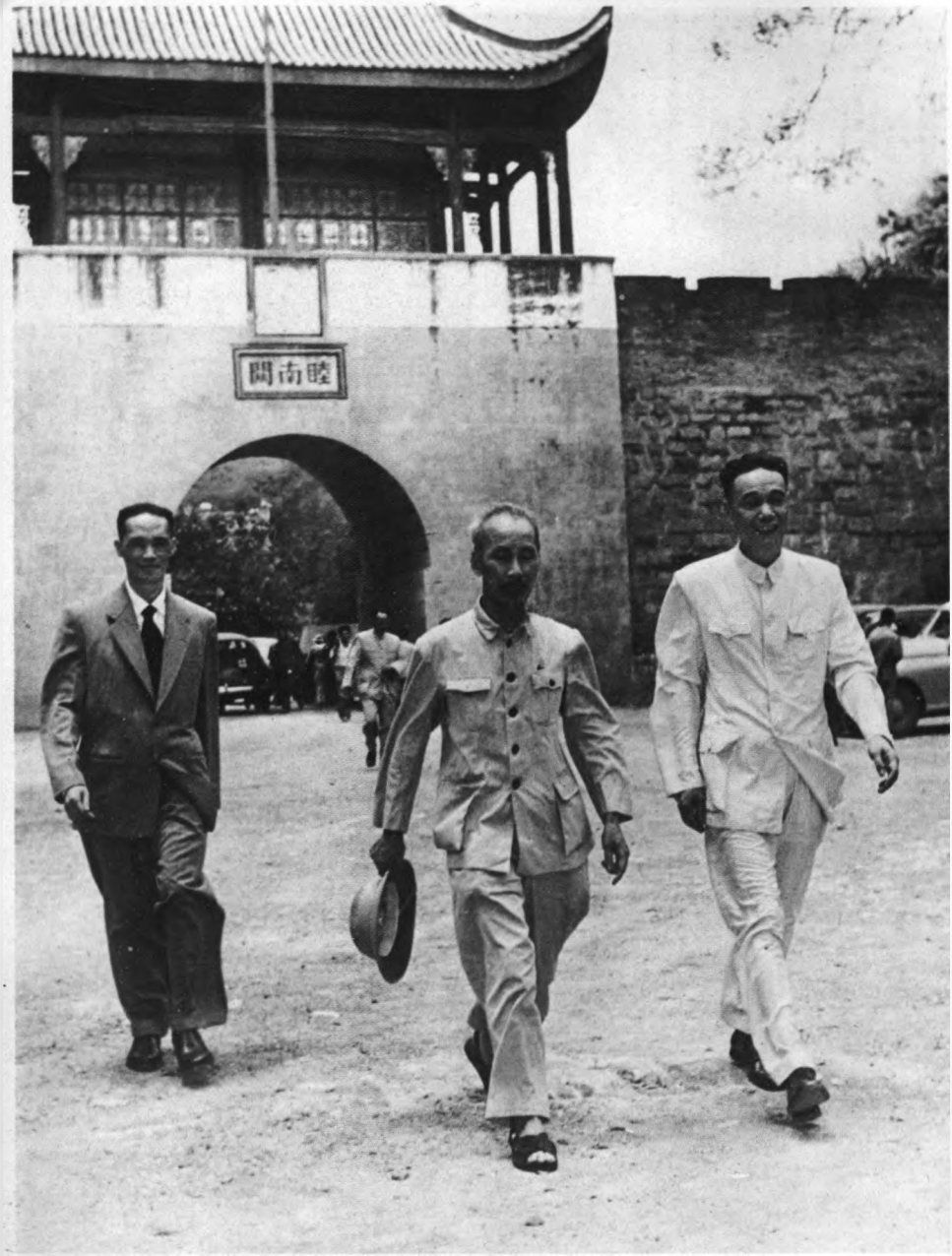
The secret contact station of the Vietnamese revolutionaries in Longzhou, Guangxi, China


越聲

The magazine *Viet Thanh* published in 1936 in Nanjing, China. The title of the monthly was the facsimile of the author.



With President Ho Chi Minh (centre) and Chairman Ton Duc Thang (right) at the inaugural ceremony of the Viet Nam Labour Party, February 1951



President Ho Chi Minh and the author (Ambassador to China) accompanied by Ji Pengfei, Chinese Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Munan Pass, June 1955

Mao Zedong, the author, Zhu De and Ho Chi Minh at the Beijing Airport, July 21, 1955

(*Upper left*) Meeting with Zhu De, July 12, 1965

(*Right*) With Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice-Premier Chen Yi, July 14, 1965

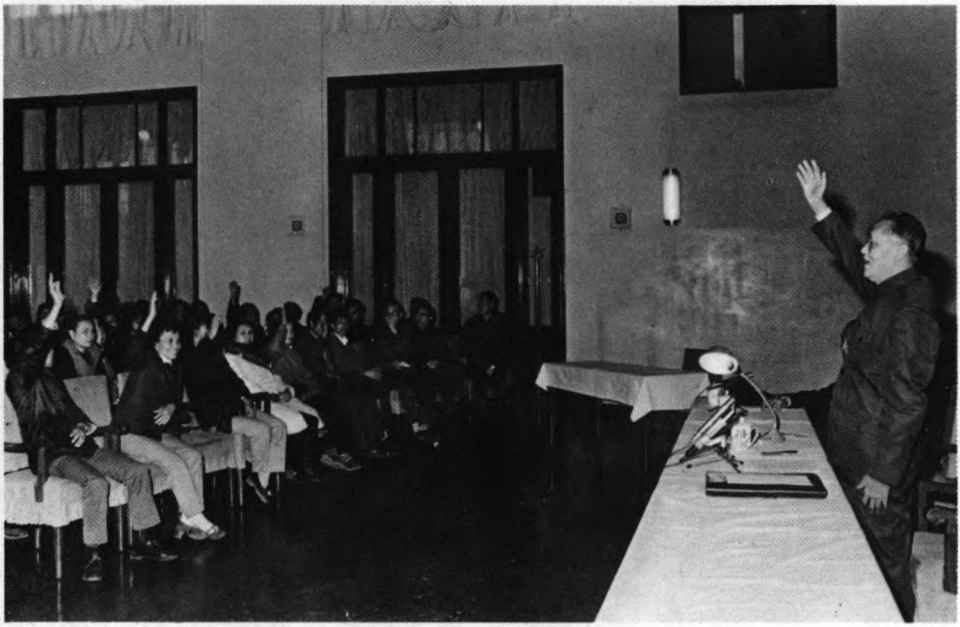
(*Upper right*) With Mao Zedong, July 16, 1965

With President Ho Chi Minh at a mass rally on the Ba Dinh Assembly Hall, 1967

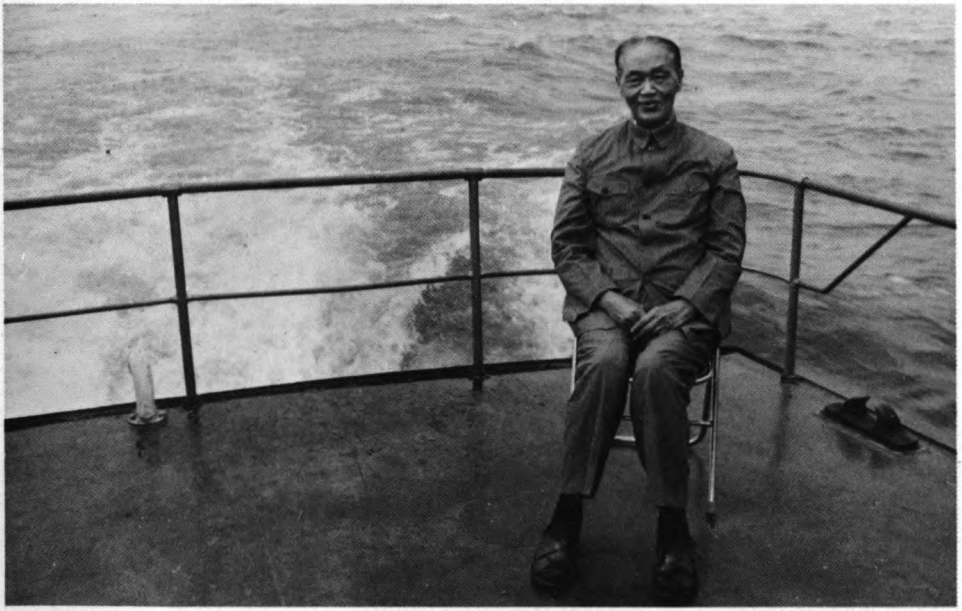
Holding a press conference in Beijing, 1979

Warm reception given by Comrade Deng Xiaoping upon the author's arrival in Beijing, 1979

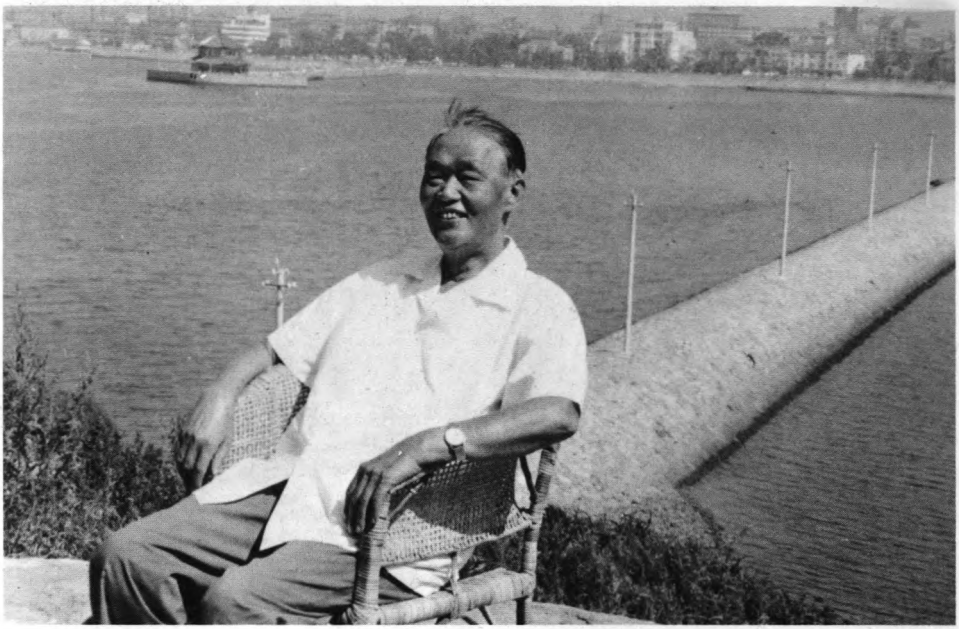
Visiting the former site of the Peasant Movement Institute in Guangzhou, January 1980



Giving a speech to overseas Vietnamese in Kunming, 1980



On board a ship off Beihai City, Guangxi, 1983



In Qingdao, Shandong, 1984

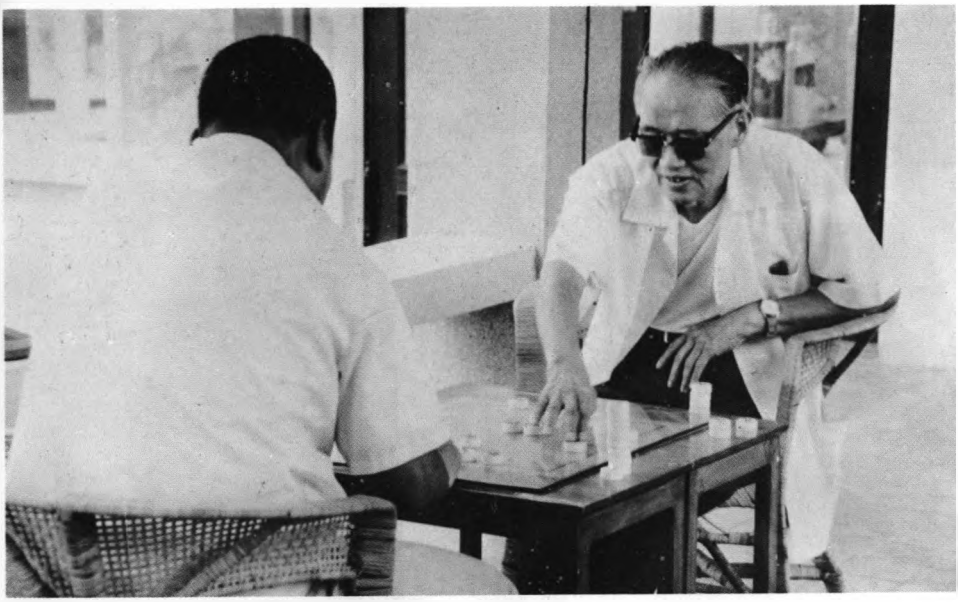
Swimming in the sea off Qingdao, Shandong, 1984

At the reception held in Beijing in 1985 to mark the 40th anniversary of the Vietnamese August Revolution. Seated are members of the former Chinese Advisers' and Experts' Groups to Viet Nam. From left: Li Qiang, the author (standing), Qian Liren, Wei Guoqing, Fang Yi, Qiao Xiaoguang and Luo Guibo

With Qiao Shi and Wang Zhaoguo, July 5, 1986

With Yang Shangkun, Vice-Chairman of the Military Commission of the CPC Central Committee, September 2, 1986

Writing an inscription: "The friendship between Viet Nam and China will last forever."



Playing chess with a staff member

Writing a poem in Chinese

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Preface

From 1858 when French imperialists occupied Port Da Nang to 1975 when Saigon, the last stronghold of imperialism in Viet Nam, was liberated, the Vietnamese revolution lasted 117 years. During these long years the Vietnamese people lived in deep misery while waging resolute struggles for independence of their Fatherland. The revolutionaries launched one movement after another. Thousands upon thousands of people were tortured or thrown into jail, many laid down their lives heroically in struggle. Under these circumstances President Ho Chi Minh integrated the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism with the realities of the country and advanced the correct revolutionary line of uniting all patriotic forces of the nation and seeking sympathy of the progressive forces in other parts of the world. In the end, the Vietnamese revolution was crowned with victory, and Viet Nam achieved genuine liberation and reunification.

As a citizen of a conquered nation, I was trying to find a way leading towards revolution when I came under the strong influence of revolutionary seniors like Truong Cong Dinh, Phan Dinh Phung, Hoang Hoa Tham, Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chu Trinh. Later I benefited a lot by learning from President Ho. Thus, I joined the revolution in 1926. During the several decades of my revolutionary career I had never thought of writing my reminiscences. I declined to do so even during my years in Hanoi when comrades of the Institute of Research on Party History asked me several times to write, as part of the Party's work, about my revolutionary activities, because I knew that my contributions to the revolution were only "a drop in the ocean".

In the more than 20 years during which I worked together with Le Duan, I came to see clearly that he was a schemer who put his own interests and those of his followers above the interests of the whole nation. Especially during the years before and after President Ho's death, I came to see more clearly how despicable and dangerous he was when he attempted to usurp leadership of the Party, distorted

history and mustered all possible forces to oppose China and invade Kampuchea, betraying Marxism-Leninism, the Fatherland and the revolution.

Such being the case, I felt that I should write my reminiscences, not just to record my humble contributions to the revolution but, more important, to expound the ideas, line and methods of work that President Ho had formulated for different periods of the revolution and expose some of the facts that Le Duan had tried to cover up, distort, or obliterate. My intention is to help those who are concerned about the Vietnamese revolution to see through the deceptions imposed by writers hired by Le Duan.

This book of reminiscences is divided into seven parts:

Part One: Embarking on the Road of Revolution. This was written at the request of the exhibition hall devoted to the history of my hometown, Quynh Doi Village, Quynh Luu County, in Nghe An Province. As the text of this part has already sent to that exhibition hall and the Nghe Tinh Provincial Institute of Research on Party History, I am staying with the original text.

Part Two: Years of Revolutionary Activities in Siam.

Part Three: Years of Revolutionary Activities in China.

Part Four: Years Before and After the August Revolution.

Part Five: The New Task—Improving Overseas Work.

Part Six: Years in China as Representative of the Government and the Party Central Committee.

Part Seven: The Vietnamese Revolution and Le Duan's Betrayal. This part records Le Duan's journey from a revolutionary to a renegade and the subjective and objective factors which led to his betrayal of the revolution. The major subjective factor is that instead of trying to remould himself so as to serve the revolution, he took advantage of the revolution to raise his own position and prestige, and instead of showing concern for the welfare of the people, he made use of the people's force to turn Viet Nam into a power dominating part of the world. The objective factor is the Soviet leaders who, with their chauvinistic mentality, used every possible means to force fraternal parties and countries of the "socialist community" to act in compliance with their views and line and attack those who refused to do so, to sow internal dissension by supporting one faction and forcing the other to step down from power and even to make military threats, for the purpose of achieving world domination. It was precisely out of this purpose that the Soviet leaders made use of Le Duan to

establish a powerful military base in Indo-China, oppose China and extend their sphere of influence to the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

In addition to the main body of the text there is an appendix which contains a chronology of my life and major activities.

As the reminiscences were being written under circumstances when I had to attend to many important matters, when firsthand material from inside Viet Nam was lacking and when I wasn't in very good health, I could only give a brief account of some major events. At some later date when conditions improve and information becomes more readily available, I will prepare a revised, more complete edition of the book.

I wrote this book in order to express my infinite respect for President Ho Chi Minh, the great leader of our nation. It was he who brought up a contingent of cadres, served the people wholeheartedly, and built an army that has been loyal to the Party and the people and that can accomplish any task, overcome any difficulty, conquer any enemy.

I wrote this book in order to express my boundless respect for the senior revolutionaries and countless unknown heroes who laid down their lives for the independence and future of Viet Nam. At the same time I wish to express my gratitude to our international friends who have sympathized with and supported the Vietnamese people in their struggle for national liberation.

Also, I wrote this book in order to express my love for my wife, who joined the revolution in 1929 and who is still under persecution by Le Duan's clique in Viet Nam, as well as for my son, my daughter-in-law and my three grandchildren.

In the process of writing this book of reminiscences, I obtained information from many institutions in Beijing doing research on Viet Nam. It included books and periodicals in Vietnamese kept by the archive departments of different offices; original Kuomintang documents and records concerning, among other things, President Ho Chi Minh's activities in Liuzhou, China, between 1942 and 1943 and his talks with U.S. Air Force Commander General Claire Chennault in Kunming in 1945; as well as data on the Vietnamese-French talks at Fontainebleau in 1946 and the Vietnamese-American talks in Paris between 1968 and 1972. These are all very important reference materials which provide reliable information concerning those events of which I had had only a general idea, and thus makes the book more

accurate and substantial in content. They are of invaluable help to me. On the occasion of the publication of this book, I wish to express my gratitude to the institutions which so kindly made all these sources of information available to me.

Hoang Van Hoan
Beijing, February 1986

Part One

EMBARKING ON THE ROAD OF REVOLUTION

In this part I will mainly relate the following:

I. My teenage years—becoming awakened to the need of revolution.

II. Longing to go abroad—trying to find a way towards revolution.

III. Embarking on the road of revolution—joining the revolutionary ranks.

I. My Teenage Years

I was born into a poor family with traditional reverence for Confucianist doctrine, in Quynh Doi Village, Nghe An Province. My teenage years were not happy ones. My father taught in schools in different provinces in Bac Ky (the North Part of Viet Nam) all year round and could only stay at home for twenty days or so during the Tet. Mother bought silk fabrics with money that she had borrowed and sold them at the markets in Lu, Sy and Hoang Mai about a dozen kilometres away from the village, starting at the break of dawn and returning home at dusk. Interest on loans in those days was very high. For example, one who borrowed 100 dong at the beginning of the year would have to pay back 130 dong at the end of the year. When unable to repay the debt by the Tet's eve, Mother would have to go to hide in her father's place. And the debtor would come to our house to curse us at the top

of his voice. As feudal habits and customs prevailed in those days, Mother was always the victim in the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, being subjected to frequent scolding and bullying.

I grew up in this unhappy family. At six, Mother sent me to my grandfather's to learn Chinese; at seven or eight, I went with my grandfather to Hoang Hoa and Tho Xuan counties and attended school there; at eleven, I went to live with my uncle on my mother's side in Thieu Hoa County and attended school there; and at twelve or thirteen, I moved to Quang Hoa County and lived with my uncle on my father's side and continued school there. These counties are all in Thanh Hoa Province.

When staying with my uncle, I started to acquire more knowledge outside of classes. My uncle was a teacher at a school in the town of Ho Nam, Quang Hoa County, Thanh Hoa Province, teaching Chinese as well as Latinized Vietnamese. I was not clever at lessons but was good at handwriting and clear in enunciation. Uncle often asked me to read for him the *Trung Bac News* and sometimes the novel *Kieu*. Having a good command of the Chinese language and being well read, he often told me stories about Japan's Meiji Reform, some of which I still remember now:

—In Japan there was a "man who always laughs", laughing at the corruption of Japan.And there was also a "man who always cries", crying over Japan's backwardness.

—Many Japanese youths were keen on the reform movement and resolved to make their country rich and strong. One of them was so obsessed by the reform that he forgot to put his trousers on again which he had taken off in order to wade across a river. He only realized it when he reached the home of his friend.

—There were in Japan "sky-binding ropes" and "sea-sweeping blooms". Maybe the former referred to electric wires or cables while the latter mine-sweeping boats or fishing boats.

In sending me to study away from home for six or seven years, my mother expected that her son would become an

accomplished man. At the same time, my absence saved food for the family and my worries about the poor conditions at home.

When I was 14, my grandmother died, and life changed slightly for the better. Father stopped going away to teach for several years, staying at home to manage the household. I was made to stay at home to learn Chinese from an old relative, Mr. Han To. Although he was well versed in Chinese studies, he failed to pass the imperial examination because he didn't know how to write Latinized Vietnamese. He did not think it worthwhile to learn Latinized Vietnamese coined by foreigners. Refusing to be reconciled to his failure in the examination, he appealed to Hue, then the imperial capital, and after re-examination the examiners decided to make him a *xiucai*.

During the days when Mr. Han To was teaching, the imperial examination system for selecting officials still existed with some modification. For instance, candidates were no longer required to compose poems or *fu* [descriptive prose interspersed with verse] in Chinese, but instead to write reports and memorials to the emperor, imperial edicts and essays in Chinese as well as theses in Latinized Vietnamese. As the content of the examination often involved some new subjects, the candidates had to read new books, mainly those Chinese books published in China at that time. Poor and remote as my hometown was, the Chinese school run by Mr. Han To often taught articles on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Francis Bacon, Queen Victoria, Peter the Great, Napoleon, George Washington and others who had significant accomplishments to their credit and were thus regarded as contemporary heroes.

Both teachers and students appreciated only the precise choice of words, the novelty in the use of allusions and the neatness of the antithesis in the articles. Although I gained some new knowledge during that period, my chief concern was still with language and on passing the examinations.

In spite of the fact that the county examination held in

1918 was the last one,* Mr. Han To still urged me to study hard and prepare to take part in the next examination.

When the last court examination was held in 1919,** it was known for certain that the imperial examination system had been abolished. Hence, my father allowed me to attend a French-Vietnamese school.

The French-Vietnamese School was in the county seat about three kilometres away from my village. Though poor, the Quynh Doi Village had a tradition of reverence for education. Among the students studying in the school there were about 40 coming from this village. Quite a number of families, no matter how poor they were, tried their best to send their children to school to learn how to read and write—if not to get a diploma—so that the children would be better able to make a living in the future, in all probability by teaching or other means.

After entering the French-Vietnamese School, I still believed that the purpose of my studying was to prepare myself for the imperial examination. But because of the change in the method of study, I no longer buried myself in reading books and writing articles. We had Sundays and summer vacations. So, I could spend some time getting to know people from different walks of life in the village and the county town. And from then on I began to understand the world in which I lived.

There were not a few learned persons in Quynh Doi, but because it was a poor village, many villagers left it to seek a living elsewhere. Though far from the city (60 kilometres to Vinh and 80 to Thanh Hoa), it was not isolated and, in fact, became a network for information from various places. People told a lot of fantastic, exaggerated stories about fighting against the French. They often spoke of Captain Quyen and

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* The county examination was the grassroots-level examination in the imperial examination system of Viet Nam, held in the capital of each province.

** The court examination was the top-level examination in the imperial examination system held in the imperial capital.

Captain Phan, who knew the art of becoming invisible and when pursued by the enemy would get a bowl of water, place a pair of chopsticks on it, mutter some incantations, step over the bowl and then be free of danger. The people of my village also knew about the Scholars' Uprising,* the Hoang Hoa Tham Uprising,** and the Tonkin Study Institute.***

There were also many stories of revolutionary struggle in the Quynh Doi Village itself. People talked about a scholar being beheaded, a man being shot by the enemy on the bank of the Dinh River, and stories about brave peasants. For instance, a young man by the name of Cu Tao was pressganged by the village head to carry the sedan chair for the county magistrate. Cu Tao told the magistrate to his face: "I have never carried a sedan chair, but since the village head forced me to come, I have no choice. However, I beg Your Highness to forgive me should anything happen when my shoulder hurts too much for me to tolerate." Being afraid of an accident, which seemed quite likely, the county magistrate had to ask the village head to find another person.

Here is another story. When the post of the village head became vacant, nobody dared take on the job. But Ho Sy Dai, an illiterate, volunteered to become the village head. During the period he served as the village head, not a month passed without his being beaten by the county magistrate. He was forced to report those villagers who had joined the "bandits",

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* The Scholars' Uprising refers to the movement launched by scholar-officials of the feudal classes to oppose the French and defend the Emperor. The movement lasted from 1885 to 1896 and spread all over the central, southern and northern parts of the country.

** The Hoang Hoa Tham Uprising refers to the anti-French guerrilla war waged by peasants in Bac Giang and Yen The under the leadership of Hoang Hoa Tham from 1887 to 1913.

*** The Tonkin Study Institute was a school and propaganda institution set up by progressive intellectuals of the Vietnamese bourgeoisie in Hanoi and Tonkin (Bac Ky) in 1907. Apart from giving lectures, they made speeches and published books and magazines. They advocated patriotism, resistance to the French, reform, abolition of the imperial examination system, development of industry and the use of domestically produced goods.

but no matter how many beatings he suffered, he stuck to his answer: "Well, I can't provide a living for them, and if they want to go away, I can't stop them, and I don't know their whereabouts." He remained an honest farmer whether he was village head or not.

People also talked about some successful candidates in the imperial examinations who refused to become officials. Mr. Ho Khoan was a learned man, but during examination he would write examination papers for others in exchange for money, while doing his own paper carelessly so as not to pass the examination. The revered scholar Mr. Huong Lo Hoang was a successful candidate in the highest imperial examination and was appointed county magistrate but he was removed from office because he opposed the French authorities.

What the villagers talked most was the family of Mr. Ho Ba On's. Ho Ba On once served as Chief Justice of Nam Dinh Province and laid down his life in the fight to defend the City of Nam Dinh from attack by the French army in 1883. His eldest son Ho Ba Kien participated in the Scholars' Anti-French Movement and was arrested, put into jail and later shot by the imperialists. His second son Ho Thuc Linh, a successful candidate in the imperial examination, also took part in the anti-French movement and was arrested. During an interrogation, the imperialists made him sit on a burning-hot copper plate, and he sat there calmly to show he was not afraid of them at all. Mrs. Lua, daughter-in-law of Ho Ba On's, was a worthy heroine of Quynh Doi. Being a liaison for the Nghe Tinh anti-French movement and Hoang Hoa Tham, she travelled constantly between Nghe An and Yen The. Several times she found herself in dangerous situations but each time she outwitted the enemy. Later, she was arrested and tortured but she refused to disclose anything to the enemy for the life of her. Every time before she was tortured, she would chew and swallow as much tobacco as to make herself unconscious. Once she came to, she would cry out: "Why did our elders become officials to make us suffer like this?" Hearing these words, the officials who had tortured her felt the pricks of conscience and

had to release her for lack of evidence and put her under the surveillance of the local authorities. Mrs. Lua sent her son Ho Hoc Lam to take part in the "Travel-to-the-East" Movement* with Phan Boi Chau. He went to Japan and later to China. Ho Ba Cu, the grandson of Ho Ba On, also known as Ho Tung Mau, went abroad to engage in national independence movement. All these heroic undertakings had great and far-reaching influence on the youth in the village.

Among the students and teachers in Quynh Doi Village there was a group of ardent people who were dedicated to revolution. Among the scholars who advocated the study of Sinology, there were also a number of impassioned persons. From my contacts with them I became familiar with some revolutionary poems and couplets and had access to progressive books.

I can still remember some of the poems and essays but am not sure how close to the original manuscripts these are or who wrote them.

Poem by Mr. Thai Before He Was Executed

When the bugle sounds the third time,
I'll leave the world under the butcher's knife.
An invincible general during my life,
I'll be an immortal after my death.

A Couplet Rebuffing Cao Ngoc Le

Nowhere on earth will there be a burial place for
Cao Ngoc Le,
Ever-lasting as heaven will live Tong Duy Tan.

Tong Duy Tan was a scholar who passed the imperial examination and was anti-French. He was beheaded in public after Can Ngoc Le, his student, had secretly informed the French authorities of his revolutionary activities.

* The "Travel-to-the-East" Movement was a movement organized in 1905 by the progressive intellectuals of the Vietnamese bourgeoisie to send students to Japan to study its Meiji Reform, with the aim of ridding Viet Nam of French colonial rule.

Elegiac Couplet Mourning the Death
of a Friend's Mother

As there are no Western men in the country,
Unnoticed a heroine passed away,
Leaving behind no Kossuthian writings.
Compatriots who regard Viet Nam as their Fatherland
Should weep for the heroine,
And in costumes of mourning
Lament her death.

The expression "Western men" implies that men in Western countries, and in European countries in particular, show respect for women, which was not the case in Viet Nam.

Kossuth (1802-1894) was a national hero of Hungary who wrote a detailed account in his memoirs of the education his mother gave him.

Couplet Congratulating a Friend on His Having
Passed the Imperial Examination

With father passing the county, brother the provincial and you the imperial examinations, the whole family now are officials. In comparison with others, how favoured you are by the state and the Emperor!

With Phan staying in Japan, Dang banished to an island and Ngo still imprisoned, they are either in fetters or thousands of miles away. Looking back at the imperial city, what of the embroidered robes and officials' tablets!

In this couplet the example of three patriotic intellectuals —Phan Boi Chau who was conducting activities in Japan and Dang Nguyen Can and Ngo Duc Ke, both of whom were imprisoned on the Conlon Island by the French authorities —was cited to arouse the patriotic sentiments of those who passed the imperial examinations.

Nguyen Thai Bat went abroad during the "Travel-to-the-East" Movement and surrendered to the French authorities

after returning home. He was given special permission by the Nguyen court to sit for the provincial examination without first passing examination at the county level. He became a high-ranking official after passing the examination but died shortly afterwards. While serving a sentence in prison, a girl from a foods store often brought food to him, and he married her after his release. This was made into a moving couplet by someone at that time.

Couplet Lamenting Nguyen Thai Bat

It is strange the way he went abroad and the way he surrendered, and more so the way he became a high-ranking official and got married, but it all ended up in a tragicomedy.

He did not die because of crime or imprisonment but when happiness and fortune smiled on him, so it is hard to call him happy even after he was dead.

Poem by Phan Chu Trinh Denouncing the Officialdom

The situation of the country is sad to recall,
And there were no more tears left for lamenting the heroes.
While millions of people live as slaves under an iron heel,
Stereotyped writings are still being churned out in dreams.
Willing to be cursed for centuries on end,
No one knows when you will shake off the fetters.
I know you are not without feelings,
So please read carefully this poem.

It was said that when Phan Chu Trinh sat for the imperial examination, he was required to write a poem with the title "Complete Sincerity Leads to the Sage". Phan wrote the above poem to denounce the officialdom.

Apart from these patriotic poems, there were some banned books such as Phan Boi Chau's works, Liang Qichao's

The Soul of China and Kang Youwei's *General Discussion on Reform* which some patriots secretly passed on to Mrs. Lua in Quynh Doi. So, I had the chance to read them. Though I did not yet have a profound understanding, I began to realize that I should have high ideals and do something to help save the nation and be of service to the people. The poem by Phan Chu Trinh denouncing the officialdom, in particular, made me tired of studying in the county school and wish to finish my studies as soon as possible so that I could go somewhere far away to do something great.

II. Longing to Go Abroad

I learned in 1923 that Ho Tung Mau, who had gone abroad a few years earlier, had returned secretly and been to our Quynh Doi Village. This made me think a lot and yearn day and night to go abroad.

In summer 1923 I graduated from the Junior French-Vietnamese School and decided not to continue my studies. In August that year many students in the village entered the middle school in the city of Vinh, which was known as the National Learning Academy. I went to the city under the pretext of going to have a medical check-up before entering the academy. My real intention was to find out if there was any possibility of joining the revolution. When the news came that six students from the village had been admitted to the academy, I was playing football in front of the village pavilion. A scholar of the village scolded me for not having worked harder and for lacking lofty aspirations in life.

As a matter of fact, I had aspirations which I could not reveal to others. Among my schoolmates only Nguyen Nhu and Duong Dinh Thuy had heart-to-heart talks with me. But they had gone to Ha Dong to learn weaving after finishing grade four.

As I had not taken the examination to enter the National Learning Academy, my father forced me to enrol at the

Imperial Academy in Hue. This was a special school to train a new breed of officials to serve the imperial court of Nguyen and preserve the status of protectorate, and those who wished to enter themselves for examination had to present credentials signed by local county magistrates. When I went to the county magistrate and filled out an application form for the credentials, he was very attentive because he mistook my father, Hoang Minh Kha, for Minh Kha, a rich government employee. When he realized his mistake, however, he refused to give me the credentials and drove me out. So much the better.

To dispel my father's worries, I studied very hard and even read some ancient books and poems of China's Tang Dynasty.

In the summer of 1924 I applied for admission to Nam Dinh Normal School but failed in the entrance examination. I had no other way but to go to Bac Bo and teach at an old-style private school in Trung Son Village, Kinh Trieu District, Thuy Nguyen County in Kien An Province. My father was teaching Chinese in the neighbouring village of My Son. When at the end of the year I gave my mother the first 30 dong I earned from teaching, she was most delighted.

I returned to Thuy Nguyen at the beginning of 1925. By then the French authorities had passed a regulation that private schools could continue to operate only with their approval. I had no other way out but to ask the village head (whose child was one of my pupils) to go with me to the county town to apply. When the application form was handed over at the county *yamen*, the magistrate did not even lift his eyes but, moving his jaw ever so slowly, told me to ask a scholar-official to rewrite the application. I went to many places but no one was willing to help. In the end the village head, who was more familiar with the ways of the bureaucracy, took out a one-dong note and placed it in between the pages of the application, saying that the magistrate would surely accept it this time. Sure enough, when the magistrate unfolded the application and saw the money, he readily accepted it and said: "Please go back and wait for the authorities to process it."

Only by this time did I realize that all those who filed applications to the *yamen* had to pay money, one dong for a minor issue and three to five dong for a major one. Even when a farmer's buffalo died, the farmer had to place a dong inside the application to get permission from the county authorities to bury it.

After the county magistrate accepted my application, I strolled outside of the *yamen* and saw a couplet in Chinese inscribed on the wall of the *yamen*. It was such a long time ago that I can now only remember one line which read: "Though people file in and out of the *yamen* like in a market place, the heart of the magistrate remains as pure as water in a crystal bottle." What an irony!

I returned to Trung Son from the county town, believing that since I knew Chinese and Latinized Vietnamese and I had the diploma of the Junior French-Vietnamese School, my application for teaching would doubtless be approved. So I told my students to come to school as usual. But to my surprise, after two or three weeks I got a notice from the county authorities for the close-down of the school. That ended my teaching at Thuy Nguyen.

So I went back to Quynh Doi Village and tried to become involved in activities with friends cherishing the same ideals as myself.

At that time the situation in Quynh Doi remained like a pool of stagnant water. The labouring people led a miserable life. The older generation of scholars had retired into the background, taking pride in the fact that the village was a place of culture and learning. Those in the new learning were only concerned with the new type of imperial examination. As to people who had high ideals in the past, most of them became inactive and pessimistic and some took to opium-smoking now.

I continued to learn Chinese from a scholar and during that period, I wrote an article entitled "Scenery of Trung Thon", depicting the hopelessness of the situation in which I found myself. My teacher was famous in Quynh Doi Village

for his high attainment in Chinese. One day he asked me to write a composition using the above title to describe charming persons and scenes according to his standards.

The old folks in the village always used the epithet "The Number One scenic spot in the southern hemisphere" to praise the scenery of Quynh Doi Village. They noted that there were the Horse Mountain in the south of the village, the Umbrella Mountain in the north, the Hinh Mountain in the west, and the Turtle Mountain in the east. The last two were so steep that they were called Announcement Board A and B respectively. In the village itself there were the Pen Hillock and the Inkstone Hillock. South of the Horse Mountain were the Hung and The mountains that resembled two banners. Thus, the old folks concluded that it was thanks to this auspicious geomancy that many people in the village passed the imperial examinations. My teacher had a special liking for Trung Thon Market where there were a herbal medicine store, a couple of tailor shops and a bar. Every afternoon people would gather there to gossip. But people imbued with new ideas did not believe in geomancy nor want to chatter idly. And so I decided to avail myself of this topic to criticize such a way of life.

I wrote the composition in Chinese.

On the Scenery of Trung Thon

There was a visitor who was neither tall nor handsome. He preferred the wine-bottle to love and depicted the mountains and rivers in his poems. He enjoyed ease of mind in the midst of strange plants and rare flowers and had visited all unique mountains and lovely lakes and seas. One day we met at the Trung Thon Market. After greeting me he asked me what this place was. I replied that it was Trung Thon Market of the Quynh Doi Village. Smiling, the visitor said that he had heard that the village was the "Number One scenic spot in the southern hemisphere" and that since Trung Thon belongs to Quynh Doi, it must have a lot of scenic spots. He wanted to

know one or two so that he could visit them before he left for other places. What an embarrassing request! If you gentlemen were there, you would also be at a loss what to say. Fortunately enough, I had a moment of inspiration and replied with a reason and logic which the visitor listened to attentively and seemed to appreciate. My reply was as follows. Quynh Doi Village had been in existence for more than 500 years. In the Tran, Le and Nguyen dynasties, it had produced many sages and distinguished persons; from ancient times until the present, it had produced numerous heroes and men with lofty ideals. It was these people that won fame for the place. As to the landscape, there were the Horse Mountain in the south, the Umbrella Mountain in the north, the Hinh and Turtle mountains resembling imperial examination announcement boards, the Pen Hillock and Inkstone Hillock standing apart, and the Hung and The mountains like two fluttering banners. Indeed, Quynh Doi was worthy the name Number One scenic spot in the southern hemisphere. However, like one's fate which at times might be fortunate and at other times unfortunate, one could not but be filled with mixed feelings when talking about Quynh Doi now. As for the landscape, the Turtle Mountain still stands erect but it can no longer offer its claws; the Horse Mountain remains lofty, but it has stopped neighing in the northerly wind; smeared, the board-like mountains are no longer inscribed with the names of outstanding men of the village; and vast as it is, the Umbrella Mountain is only covered with wild bushes and flowers and is no longer of strategic significance. As for people, the number of men in the village who had become addicted to opium-smoking are to the number of a hundred and women who are bent over their looms number more than a thousand. The

scholars are only interested in passing the imperial examination and thinking about how to become a teacher, a judge, a clerk, or a councillor so as to gain glory for themselves and wealth for their families; they turn a blind eye to civil duties or social ethics. Such is the state of affairs for the so-called scholars, and when I ponder over it I cannot but feel heart-broken. The peasants depend on nature in farming, while the workers rely on their innate skills to gain benefits; no one is really interested in the science of agriculture or in technology. Businessmen are singing the song *Hou Ting Hua*—it is understandable that singsong girls do not know what national subjugation means, but how can it be that among men there are no patriotic merchants like Xuan Gao? Is it possible that the spirit of the Tung Mountain and the Mai River will also die? Alas, how can Quynh Doi with such people and such customs be still considered a famous scenic spot? And since Quynh Doi is no longer a scenic spot, what beautiful scenery is there in Trung Thon for visitors to enjoy? Thereupon the visitor was enlightened and recited a poem, which read as follows:

Why this meeting by chance,
And more of those incisive words.
Now I know a place is famous because of the people,
To hell with the dragon-seekers and tiger-catchers
(referring to the geomancers).

Though this article was written in a comparatively free style, it was still strongly influenced by the stereotyped writing as in its use of allusions and antitheses. The illusions I tried to use included: "The Sacred Tortoise Offered Its Claws", referring to the story in the Vietnamese history where King An Duong was helped by a sacred tortoise that offered its claws for him to use against the enemy; "The Alien Horse Neighing in the Northerly Wind" was cited from a poem of ancient

China expressing one's missing of the native country; "The Singsong Girls Do Not Know the Hatred of Being Subjugated" was from a poem by the Tang Dynasty poet Du Mu of China: "The singsong girls who do not know the hatred of being subjugated, still sing the *Hou Ting Hua* on the other side of the river"; and "Xuan Gao" was a patriotic merchant during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476B.C.) in the Chinese History.

On the whole this article was alright. But it sounded radical and there were some inappropriate expressions. For example, the expression "neither tall nor handsome" at the beginning of the article fit my teacher. And he was not happy with the sentence "Thereupon the visitor was enlightened." So after he had read my composition, he said angrily: "You are attacking me, aren't you?"

He returned the article to me, refusing to grade it.

In face of such a stagnant reality in the village, some progressive youths were eager to take action to make some social changes but didn't know where to begin.

Having learned the skill of weaving in Ha Dong, Nguyen Nhu and Duong Dinh Thuy returned home in 1924 and started a textile mill near the Trung Thon Market. The textile mill was actually a strawhut with two improved looms in it. Compared with the old shuttle looms used in the village which could only weave silk fabrics 40-50 cm wide, the new looms could weave fabrics 80-90 cm wide. It was a private business as far as the management of production was concerned. Still, this mill was something new and became a gathering place for patriotic people who were concerned about the current situation. There, we often read and exchanged patriotic books such as Tran Huu Do's *Bell of Independence* and *Soul of Freedom*, and writings by Phan Boi Chau, Nguyen Thuong Hien, Phan Chu Trinh and others.

Under the influence of the books and newspapers and the progressive movements in other places, a small group of close confidents was formed consisting of the former village heads

Mr. Don and Mr. Thuan, as well as Nguyen Nhu, Duong Dinh Thuy and myself. We often met to discuss current affairs and contacted those who wished to make revolution. We also talked about starting a class to teach illiterate people how to read and write and invited people from other places to teach martial arts.

More than a dozen people—all patriotic farmers—attended the literacy class. In class we read newspapers and discussed current issues, and sometimes we used covert means to disseminate patriotic poems. Finding no reason to stop our activities, the village head and the gentry had to leave us alone. The martial arts group, with only six or seven people, met secretly. In the dead of night they would assemble in front of Mr. Thuan's courtyard to practise under the instruction of a coach from Con Sat Village, Dien Chau Prefecture. However, it was discovered by the district head only a few weeks later. He threatened to report the matter to the authorities, and we had to disband the group.

One of the serious social problems in the village at that time was opium-smoking. Though there were only a few thousand people in Quynh Doi, there were several scores of smoking sets available and three or four shops that sold opium. The addicts included different types of people, and among them were frustrated persons like Ho Thuc Linh and Ho Khoan.

After exchanging views, we drafted a speech denouncing opium-smoking. I read it out at a meeting of the villagers, which was possible because we had the sympathy and support of a high-ranking, progressive scholar in the village. The speech was largely influenced by the movement to "reform rural administration". Nevertheless, to expose one of the evils in the village in front of the gentry was a bold act, which made the progressive people feel pleased.

Another significant thing we did was to persuade three clans to drop a lawsuit. In 1925 a dispute erupted among the three big families of Ho, Hoang and Nguyen, each demanding that its ancestor be made the village god, believing that its ancestor was the "founding father" of Quynh Doi Village. The

factional fights among the heads of the three clans had caused considerable strife among the villagers. We came out strongly against the lawsuit and persuaded the younger members of the three families not to support it. Duong Dinh Thuy and Duong Van Lan prepared hand bills and threw them to the houses of the scholars who had passed the provincial imperial examination, while Nguyen Nhu and I went straight to Huong Lo Hoang's place to reason things out with him. Hoang was a key figure both in the clan and in the village since he had won first place in the imperial examination at the county level and second place in the provincial examination, served as county magistrate and was appointed Lord Huong Lo. Being anti-French, he had resigned his post and returned to the village to lead a simple life, and he was respected by the villagers. We talked with him, pointing out that this dispute would benefit only the exploiters, not the villagers. Furthermore, we made him see how untenable it was for a man who had felt it beneath his dignity to serve as an official to be willing to become involved in litigation to make his ancestor the village god. Hoang made no attempt to refute any of this. In fact, he listened to us silently as if in quiet assent. As a result of our efforts, those who had originally instigated the dispute gave up, and the lawsuit thus ended.

In 1925 under the pretext of looking for a job I often went to Vinh City and sometimes also to Nghi Loc, Yen Thanh, Anh Son and Thanh Hoa to fish for information on going abroad. Every time I visited the City of Vinh I also went to the National Learning Academy to meet progressive students there. From them I learned of progressive teachers like Ha Huy Tap and Tran Mong Bach. From them I also learned about things in other countries, such as the national liberation movements in the Philippines, Egypt and India, the revolution in Russia, and communism under which the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" was applied.

The most outstanding event that took place at the time was that when Phan Boi Chau was arrested and about to be

sent to the criminal court in Hanoi for trial, a mass movement demanding his release spread across the country. In Quynh Doi Village, Nguyen Nhu's textile mill and Mr. Thuan's home just behind the mill became meeting places for people interested in the event. There people exchanged information, read newspapers and discussed many problems related to Phan Boi Chau or to state affairs.

Phan Boi Chau's writings, such as *Heaven or Emperor?*, *Letters in Blood from Overseas* and *Prescription for Curing the Soul*, which used to be banned and could only be circulated secretly, were almost in open circulation now. Although a bit on the pessimistic side, there was a deeper vein of patriotism which ran through his works and which urged the people to unite and fight for the interests of the Fatherland. Phan's writings had the unusual effect of making both reader and listener want to plunge themselves immediately in the revolutionary struggle. Of course, my friends and I myself who had a common goal felt these stirrings even more.

We became increasingly eager to go abroad and asked Mrs. Lua to arrange for us to meet Phan Huynh, Phan Boi Chau's son, after we learned that on several occasions he had helped young people to go abroad. We met with him, and he promised to send us to Siam after the Tet, but we must prepare enough money to pay our own travel expenses.

At the beginning of 1926 Nguyen Nhu, Duong Dinh Thuy, Hoang Van Hop, Ho Ngoc Chuong, Duong Van Lan and I decided to do everything possible to raise the money so that we could go to Siam together after the Tet. According to Phan Huynh, each person needed 15 dong, but we had collected only 20 dong for the six of us. Then how to make up the 70 or 80 dong we were short of? We asked a youth from a rich family to go with us on condition that he contribute 100 dong. He agreed. A few days after the Tet, the seven of us went to Vinh City in secret, where we met Phan Huynh and gave him the money. Then we checked into an inn on Second Waterway Street waiting for information. After several days of waiting in

anxiety, Phan returned and told us that we couldn't make the trip because the guide had met with some trouble. To avoid suspicion, we hurried back to Quynh Doi and thus the trip fizzled out.

The sudden absense of seven young men from the village aroused a lot of gossip. The village head and the township chief smelt something in the air and threatened the families of the young men. Their parents were very worried. When we returned to the village, we all produced some excuses for our absence, and the matter was swept under the rug.

In March 1926, during the days of Phan Chu Trinh's funeral, I went to Hanoi trying to become involved in revolutionary movement, but to no avail. It happened that the Railways Bureau was running a training course for heads of train crewmen and was enrolling new trainees. I calculated that if I could become a head of the crew, I would then have opportunities to go to Hue and Saigon and even to Na Sam, Dong Dang and Lao Cai, which were close to the Chinese border. It would mean greater chance for me to go abroad. Hence, I enrolled for entrance examination. I got high marks in all subjects. However, after admission I was not assigned to work on a train on probation. Instead, I was sent to the Dien Chau Railway Station to learn on the job, selling and checking train tickets, receiving and transmitting telegrams.

This job was not at all what I wished to do. However, I had the opportunity to meet with people who worked for the Society for Industrial Development. It was formed by patriotic businessmen. I learned from them that the Society had set up a branch in Thanh Hoa which was frequented by people with lofty ideals. So, I decided to resign my job at the station and go to find a job in Thanh Hoa.

One day the station master insulted a clerk, calling him a "stupid swine". The clerk didn't say anything back, but I felt extremely indignant about the matter. At meal time I said in a serious manner to the station master in the presence of the clerk that if he could call a clerk "a stupid swine", he would certainly do the same to a clerk still in training. I also told him

that he should know that both station master and clerks were employees, with the only difference in the length of service. Shortly afterwards I wrote a letter home saying that I would quit work at the station. Earlier, on several occasions, my mother had stopped over at the Dien Chau Station on her way to the Sy Market and had been embarrassed when she saw me checking tickets at the entrance of the station. She had no objection to my quitting. So, I resigned, using failing health as an excuse. After that I went hither and thither trying to find a way leading to revolution. And at last a good opportunity presented itself.

III. Embarking on the Road of Revolution

In Autumn 1926 I went to Dong Son County in Thanh Hoa to look for Cu Minh Voi, a former schoolmate of mine teaching at a village school there. I stayed with him and during that time I wrote an article condemning the Nguyen Court for slandering those who mourned Phan Chu Trinh. I intended to send the article to the *Tan The Ky* (*New Era*), but I asked Cu to read it first. He mailed it immediately after he had read it. A week later, I received a copy of the issue of *Tan The Ky* in which my article appeared. Cu was so excited that he introduced the article to his friends.

One day Lap, a teacher, came to see me at Cu's place. He began at once to talk about my article and poems and then offered his views on the current situation. He told me that he had heard about the Tet couplet and poem and had recently read my article published in the *Tan The Ky*. He said that through my writings he had discovered that I had deep respect for the patriot Phan Chu Trinh. He also knew that I felt a great debt to my parents for their lifetime of hard work and to the kindness of heaven, and that I longed to travel to the Philippines, India and Egypt where national liberation movements were in full swing. He asked whether I was willing to travel farther if the revolution so needed me to.

It turned out that Cu had read the couplet I had put up in the room and my Tet poem to some of his colleagues, among whom was Lap, a cadre doing underground revolutionary work.

The Tet Couplet

Selfless is the springtime that will visit the north, the centre and the south alike, but where to look for the all-embracing splendid light?

Different are the festivals in the Philippines, Egypt and India, where the beautiful sceneries are worthy to see.

The Tet Poem

Twenty-one springs have flown past like an arrow,
How shall I spend the remaining years of my life?
The nature looks the same but time passes by,
In longing and desire how much time I've wasted.
The kindness of heaven must be repaid without fail,
And the hard work of my parents shall never be forgotten.
I wish I'll always keep my days of youth,
With everlasting youth I'll display my talent.

I wrote the couplet and the poem to express my feelings, never expecting that they would be appreciated by revolutionaries.

As through Cu I had already become acquainted with Lap the teacher and I had often talked with him at the Society for Industrial Development, I firmly believed him to be a revolutionary. Therefore, I no longer tried to conceal my thoughts from him. I told him that I wished to join the revolution and that I was ready to go as far away as the revolution needed me to go.

Lap accepted my request and asked me to get everything ready as he was going to send a group of people abroad very soon.

I returned to Quynh Doi immediately to make prepara-

tions. I left a letter for Father saying that in order to make a living I had resolved to go to other places and would return home to repay my parents' kindness when I had accomplished something. The letter was also intended for my family to cope with the authorities and avoid being implicated in my doings. I placed the letter secretly in the box my father would surely open when he returned from teaching in Kien An. To Mother I just said as before that I was leaving home to look for a job.

After several years of searching, I finally found the people who would send me abroad to study and engage in revolution. With great excitement and confidence, I was ready for the journey.

Teacher Lap and I left Thanh Hoa for Hanoi by train. After arrival we spent the night in the house of a family in an area under Hoang Cao Khai's control. The following day we reached Bac Ninh by bus and then Dong Dang by train. It was already dark when we got there. We dodged the ticket collector, going in the opposite direction of the exit. In darkness I saw dimly that there were about a dozen of us. We dashed into the bushes before the train started. After it moved out of the station, we all assembled and waited in the brush not far from the rails. Before long the liaison man came and told Lap that as there were civilian corps checking passengers on the road we had planned to pass, we would have to take a back road through the woods before crossing the border the next day.

After a whole night's journey on foot, climbing mountains and wading rivers, we finally arrived at Nadi Village, Gongzha Township inside China and stayed with a villager by the name of Ling.

The General Headquarters of the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades sent Comrade Tan Anh to meet us at the village.

At that time the Chinese revolution was in a stage of smooth development. During his lifetime Dr. Sun Yat-sen advocated the policies of alliance with Russia, co-operation with the Communist Party and assistance to the peasants and

workers. In his testament he took a stand in favour of China's uniting with all the weak and small nations of the world that treated China on equal terms. Although Chiang Kai-shek harboured evil intentions, he dared not turn against the Communist Party and attack it in the open yet. The Kuomintang government had set up the Whampoa Military Academy in Guangdong Province, and President Ho Chi Minh arranged for a group of Vietnamese revolutionary cadres to study there.

In the name of the cadres at the Whampoa Military Academy Comrade Tan Anh made a banner on which were written "New Recruits to the Whampoa Military Academy". Carrying this banner, he brought us from the border to Longzhou, where we rested for a couple of days in the home of a family named Liang before we proceeded to Nanning by steamboat and later to Guangzhou.

We did not actually enter the Whampoa Military Academy although we had gone to Guangzhou ostensibly for such a purpose.

The revolutionary school we entered was in fact a political training class founded by Comrade Nguyen Ai Quoc in a house at No. 5, Renxing Street, Guangzhou.

I could not remember which class I attended but I learned from other comrades later on that it was not the first. There were more than 20 trainees, most of them students and intellectuals. Some of them were students who had just taken part in the students' strike in Nam Dinh City, but there were also learned scholars of Chinese like Le Manh Trinh.

The training lasted about two months, and the lectures fell into three different categories: problems of world revolution, problems of the Vietnamese revolution and problems related to methodology of revolutionary movements.

Lectures on the problems of world revolution concentrated on a study comparing the Russian Revolution with the bourgeois revolutions in Britain, France and other capitalist countries. The instructors focused on analyzing the differences between the Russian Revolution and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois revolutions and sometimes made critical comments

on Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles.

Lectures on the problems of the Vietnamese revolution analyzed the oppression and exploitation of our people by the French imperialists and pointed out that the main forces for overthrowing colonial imperialism and feudalism were the workers and peasants. In many passages the ambiguous line adopted by Phan Boi Chau was criticized -- for instance, he classified the revolution into "civilized revolution" and "brutal revolution", he proposed to make Cuong De the emperor and later life president, and so on. In some passages Mahatma Gandhi was also criticized for attempting to realize national liberation through "non-co-operation" and "non-violence".

Lectures on methodology of revolutionary movements dealt with propaganda work, organization work, workers' movement, peasants' movement, women's movement, students' movement and so forth.

President Ho Chi Minh exercised direct leadership over the training class and was one of the instructors. Using the assumed name of Comrade Wang, he often gave lectures on the Vietnamese revolution. Many among the trainees knew that Comrade Wang was in fact Comrade Nguyen Ai Quoc whom they had admired for a long time. Here in Guangzhou we were deeply impressed by his down-to-earth style of work, serious attitude, comradely warmth, and the clear, terse but also profound language he used.

Apart from President Ho, the other instructors were Chinese Communist Party cadres. Among them were Comrade Peng Pai, a peasant movement leader, who lectured on the peasant movement and Comrade Liu Shaoqi, a worker movement leader, who lectured on the workers' movement.

When the Chinese instructors gave lectures, Comrades Ho Tung Mau, Tan Anh or Lam Duc Thu interpreted. On one occasion it happened that all three of them were away and it was President Ho who did the interpreting himself. None of us had known that he could speak Chinese. His quick and succinct interpreting and his ability to converse with Chinese comrades filled us all with heartfelt admiration.

After each lecture we divided into groups to discuss the content of the lecture. Each trainee summarized his own understanding of the lecture, after which the others could make additional comments until the content of the lecture had been fully comprehended by all.

Our class ran a "wall-newsletter" where the poems and articles written by the trainees were put up. Sometimes we would perform improvised dramas in the dormitory. Usually President Ho acted the role of the worker or the peasant.

In addition to attending lectures and group discussions, we went to visit the Whampoa Military Academy and paid respects to the Tomb of the Seventy-two Martyrs, a famous place in Guangzhou in memory of those who died in the Huanghuagang Uprising on April 27, 1911. Once, President Ho arranged for us to be visitors at a workers' meeting organized by the Chinese Communist Party.

We spent the New Year festival in Guangzhou. Being far away from the Fatherland, we observed the occasion in a frugal manner but with warm, comradely feelings. Unfortunately a couple of trainees, thinking that the festival should be observed by having a feast, sold some clothes and had a luxurious meal. They contributed very little to the revolution in the days to come.

The training course concluded after the New Year. We had a ceremony in front of Pham Hong Thai's tomb to celebrate our initiation into the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades. The beloved martyr Pham Hong Thai had awakened a generation of young patriots with a bomb he thrown in Shamian, Guangzhou. Before his tomb we made a solemn vow to fight the rest of our lives for the cause of not only of Viet Nam's liberation but also of world revolution.

Afterwards the General Headquarters arranged for a few comrades and myself to return to Viet Nam to carry on our activities. We left at different times and took different routes so as to minimize the human cost in case we were arrested.

Coming back home was easier than leaving it had been. It took me only about three hours to cross the border and reach

the Dong Dang Station before dawn. I entered the station quietly and sat down waiting with my back against the wall. At daybreak I heard the train from Na Sam rattling near.

I bought a ticket for Hanoi but I got off at Bac Ninh where I took a truck to Hanoi. Then I hired a rickshaw to get to Van Dien and then to Trinh Xuyen in Nam Dinh to see my brother-in-law, who was teaching there, and to find out how things were with the family. He told me that the family was very much worried because I had not returned home for the Tet. Some members of the family had wanted to report the case to the authorities so as to avoid their being personally implicated. Father had been hesitant, but Mother had been firmly opposed to the idea. She had said that when asked about my disappearance they could just tell the authorities that they knew nothing of my whereabouts. That would leave the door open for me to come home at some time in the future. On the other hand, she had said, that if they reported the case to the authorities, that would make it impossible for me to ever return home again. So in the end it was decided not to report. Having learned all this, I went early the next morning to the Trinh Xuyen Station and bought a ticket for home. As the train pulled out the station, I hummed a poem by a writer whose name I did not know:

Frequently the train whistle blows in my ears,
And I then long for my native land.
On my shoulders rest the heavy duty of the nation,
And that dwarfed my travel expenses.

One afternoon in the first month of the lunar year when members of the Hoang clan were worshipping their ancestors, I returned to Quynh Doi Village. I went directly to the ancestral temple to let them know that I was there. When people asked me where I had been, I said that I had been unsuccessfully looking for a job in Saigon. So I had had to come back. A few days later Mr. Ho Khoan, a circumspect person, whispered to me with a smile: "So you didn't make it, did you?" I replied vaguely: "I missed the chance."

The trip to Guangzhou was thus covered up. At last I realized my dream to go abroad to become involved in revolution. I was now in the phase of revolutionary activities in my life.

To start my revolutionary activities, I needed a job as a cover to divert the attention of the authorities and a place to make contacts. With the help of a brother of mine I got a job as a tutor for a family in Cau Giat. My employer was a Catholic who agreed that he would give me a yearly salary of 60 dong in addition to meals. My duty was to teach his two children Latinized Vietnamese and some French.

The first step of my revolutionary work was to establish a grass-roots organization. Some close friends of mine in former days—Nguyen Nhu, Duong Dinh Thuy, former village heads Mr. Don and Mr. Thuan, Duong Van Lan and Hoang Van Hop joined the organization first. Then came the division of work—some of us who stayed in the village were to do propaganda and organization work in the county while others who had relatives or business to do outside the village were to do propaganda work wherever possible. As former village head Mr. Don's grandparents lived in Yen Thanh, he was assigned to build up the organization there. Duong Dinh Thuy, who had a textile mill in Nghi Loc County and often went to Vinh City, was to expand the organization in these two places. Nguyen Nhu, who made frequent visits to Anh Son County, was to develop the organization in Anh Son; and Duong Van Lan, who was teaching at Cam Ferry, was to carry out work there.

I often visited Yen Ly and Van Phan to get in touch with Vo Mai and members of the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades there. Sometimes I also went to Nghe An City to discuss work with Tran Van Cung and Nguyen Van Loi. However, It was Teacher Lap, who had assumed the name of Hoang Lun, who often came to Cau Giat to meet with me.

Nineteen Twenty-seven witnessed acute conflict between the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades and the New Vietnamese Revolutionary Party. Before the two organi-

zations split, I had met with Dao Xuan Mai and Thai Van Dac, through the arrangement by Hoang Lun, at the Quyet Mountain near Nghe An to discuss possibilities of amalgamating the two organizations into a joint Thanh-Nghe-Tinh interprovincial organization. But the efforts at merger failed and we stopped meeting with each other.

In order to be able to work in different places, I stopped teaching in Cau Giat at the end of 1927.

In the early days of 1928 news came from the General Headquarters of the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades in Guangzhou that Chiang Kai-shek had openly turned against the Communist Party during the Guangzhou Uprising of December 1927 and the revolution had been brutally suppressed. Some Vietnamese revolutionary cadres, including Comrade Ho Tung Mau, were arrested. The Association's Trung Ky Committee proposed to distribute leaflets to call on overseas Chinese to support the Vietnamese revolution and demand that Chiang Kai-shek release the Vietnamese revolutionary comrades.

Duong Dinh Thuy, Duong Van Lan and I went to Vinh City together to hand out the leaflets. Duong Dinh Thuy was arrested because he had mistakenly allowed a spy from a land-measuring office to join the organization.

Although nothing happened to me, his arrest put me on the alert. I went to discuss emergency measures with Nguyen Nhu and we decided that we would have to move frequently. In the meantime I was going to Thanh Hoa to see if Hoang Lun had any idea. On my way I returned to Quynh Doi when it was completely dark. On seeing me, Mother told me that that afternoon two county policemen had come to arrest me and that the matter had been settled only after they had been given two dong.

That night I asked Comrade Hoang Van Hop (who was later executed by the enemy in Quynh Doi) to come to my place and briefed him on his tasks before I went to a secret place to sleep. As my family gave me most careful help, nobody outside it knew anything about my visit home this time.

Being a revolutionary under enemy pursuit, I knew I should do everything possible to allay the anxieties my family felt regarding my personal safety. Hence, I said nothing to my mother and my wife, who was nursing our one-year-old baby. But I never expected that my leaving home at the end of this visit would mean separation from my country for 14 years and from my parents and wife for 18 years.

Taking with me some cooked rice and a cloth bag with a steelyard in it and disguising myself as a raw silk trader, I took my leave one evening, cutting across some barren fields in the darkness and finally reaching the No. 1 Highway. Then I walked on foot to Thanh Hoa. After crossing the Ghep Ferry, my legs were so sore and painful that I had to hire a rickshaw to take me to the office of the Society for Industrial Development in the city of Thanh Hoa. When I reached the place, the friends were having their supper.

A few days after hearing my report Hoang Lun informed me that the Ky Committee had decided to send me to work in Siam.

According to plan I borrowed a bicycle and set out for Vinh City from Thanh Hoa to look for a man named Vo Mai who was to make arrangements for me to go to Siam together with a liaison aide who was soon to leave for Siam. Vo Mai would also travel with us, as he was to discuss some problems concerning liaison work there.

Vo Mai took me to Dien Chou Prefecture, where we hid ourselves in Dau Chuong's place. Then, a man named Vuong Thuc Xuan brought Vo Mai and I to Huong Khe County, Ha Tinh Province. After staying for a few days with a villager whose house was on the perimeter of a jungle, we crossed the jungle and got to Siam via Laos.

This was my second trip abroad. For my first trip, I went to China to find out what revolution was all about and learn how to become a revolutionary. At that time I had mixed feelings of both uneasiness and excitement, rather like a man groping in the dark who, suddenly seeing a light, presses ahead eagerly. When I travelled to Siam this time, the revolution

back home had been suppressed, and so I could not help being worried about my fellow comrades back in Viet Nam and fearing that my parents and wife would be persecuted by the gentry and officials. The more I thought, the heavier I felt the responsibility resting on my shoulders. I resolved henceforth to do my utmost to win freedom for my Fatherland.

In 1929 in Udon, Siam, I wrote a play entitled *People Going Abroad*, which was performed on stage in Udon by some comrades and myself. A song from the play quoted below expresses my feelings at the time:

Verdant are the mountains one after another,
Deep are my worries when looking towards my native land from afar.
Lofty and steep stand the Dong Trim and Dong Treo,
And the surging Xam and Moi rivers create harm with floods.
With Ac piercing through the clouds, the road ahead is still long,
Swelling with rain, the Oi River cannot be crossed.
Climbing the mountains and wading the rivers, I have mixed feelings,
Profound is my longing for my family and Fatherland.
By the mountain ranges I make the solemn pledge:
We'll meet again when our country is liberated.

Here, Dong Trim, Dong Treo and Ac are names of the mountains, and the Xam, Moi and Oi rivers are the ones we crossed on our way to Siam.

After six days of travelling across mountains and rivers, we arrived at a place a few kilometres away from Thakhek where several overseas Vietnamese families lived. When we reached a secluded ferry at dusk, an overseas Vietnamese was waiting for us with a small boat. He ferried us across the river to Nakhon Phanom, a Siamese city by the Mekong River.

It was about the end of May 1928.

Part Two

YEARS OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES IN SIAM

(1928-1935)

Vo Mai and I entered Siam at the end of May 1928 and, with the help of local comrades, we settled down temporarily at the liaison station in Ban May Village, Nakhon Province.

Comrade Ngo Tuan, also known as Ba Doc, met us on behalf of the organization in Siam. Taking us as people like those groups of people who had come here before to study, he said at the very start: "I'm afraid you'll have to go back, because no more students from Viet Nam are accepted here now."

The procedures for the introduction of a person were very inadequate, something very common in those days. I explained to Ba Doc that the Trung Ky Committee had sent me here not to study but to work and that Comrade Vo Mai had been sent here to take charge of liaison work between the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades in Siam and the organization back in Viet Nam.

In order to let Ba Doc know more about me, I also told him that I knew Tu Chinh (Le Manh Trinh), Mr. Chu (Tran Van Chan) and some other comrades who had attended the Guangzhou Training Course with me in 1926 and were still working in Siam.

Arrangements were then made for us to stay in the home of Le Khoan (Comrade Ly Tu Trong's father) which was the

main meeting place of the Ban May Village liaison station.

Near the house of Mr. Le Khoan there was a primary school with a teacher by the name of Hoang Trac, a distant cousin of mine who had come to Siam before me. We knew each other well but as was required by our rule of confidentiality, people from the same clan or hometown were forbidden from recognizing each other.

About a week later I started to have contacts with members of the Co-operative Society, a mass organization set up by the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades here. When I was together with them, I often read to them poems and articles written by Phan Boi Chau, Phan Chu Trinh, Yen Do, Tu Xuong, Tan Da and other patriots, thus they came to know me as quite a well read person. It seemed that by that time they had been informed that I was a cadre sent here by the organization, and they were nicer to me than before.

Shortly afterwards Le Manh Trinh came to see me and took me to Udon, while Vo Mai left for home after finishing his liaison work.

My work in Siam can be divided into two stages: work with the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades in Siam and work under the leadership of the Siamese Communist Party.

I. The Period During Which I Worked with the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades in Siam

The day I arrived at Udon happened to be the anniversary of the death of the martyr Pham Hong Thai (June 19, 1928). Comrades asked me to decorate the hall where the ceremony was to take place and to do the calligraphy for the couplet in Chinese which read:

A true man who did what nobody had done has been
commemorated for four years running, his
lofty ideals still shared by survivors.
His spirit, which is still alive, has always wished,
even in the nether world, that victory will be
won by his comrades.

I thought that this very nice couplet had been written by one of the comrades here. It wasn't until later when I came across it in my readings that I found out that it had been written by Dang Nguyen Can in memory of a revolutionary martyr. It was a remarkably appropriate couplet to commemorate Pham Hong Thai.

I was also asked to read the eulogy written by Mr. Dang Thuc Hua (who was affectionately called "the Granddad who travels on foot").

After the memorial service I went to work in Noong On, about 10 kilometres away from Udon, where a grass-roots organization under the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades was operating. I was asked to administer a training school for teenagers together with Granddad.

There were 18 pupils in the school, most of whom were children of overseas Vietnamese. Some had been sent from Nghe An and Ha Tinh for training. Mai Van Quang, Duong Tri Trung and Do Van Huong—at that time about 16 or 17 years old—were all attending the school.

It was a work-study revolutionary school, with both students and teachers taking part in physical labour after classes.

The curriculum was primarily a general knowledge course imbued with a patriotic message. Granddad taught Chinese while I taught Vietnamese. I lectured to the students on the history and geography of Viet Nam and taught them how to do arithmetic and recite patriotic poems and articles, the main objective being to ignite the students' hatred for the French colonialists and to temper their revolutionary will so that they would become strong, able people devoted to the cause of national liberation. Apart from Dang Thuc Hua and myself, Le Man Trinh from time to time came to give one or

two lectures at the school.

The food at the school was very simple and living conditions spartan. There were two rows of straw-huts in the school. The larger, three-roomed house served as classrooms. An oblong wood plank was placed in the middle of the house, serving as the desk. On both sides of the plank were benches. At night the desk was used by the students as their bed. The smaller house was used as the kitchen, the dining-room and the storeroom for all kinds of tools.

School life was quite regular. In the morning, I did morning exercises with the students on the school grounds (Dang Thuc Hua, 58 years old and in poor health, was exempted from doing morning exercises) and then engaged in physical labour before teaching. Physical labour included growing sweet potatoes and vegetables, planting fruit trees, raising chickens and pigs, preparing meals, washing bowls, fetching water and so forth. Occasionally we carried the sweet potatoes we harvested to the village where we exchanged them for rice.

Such labour was beneficial to the students because they could learn something useful and foster a revolutionary spirit. But its main objective was to ensure our means of subsistence, as the organization could only subsidize what the school itself could not provide.

Before, when I had been a student living at home, I did not know anything about manual labour. But later, when I had acquired a higher revolutionary awareness, my understanding of the value of physical labour grew, and I helped carry water and repair roads in the village. Now in Noong On, physical labour had become a daily necessity. This new way of life brought me closer to the masses, and I began to have a better understanding of the role played by the workers and peasants in the revolution. And this was exactly the point emphasized the most by President Ho when we took part in the Training Class in Guangzhou.

While teaching in Noong On, I also took on some leadership responsibilities for the Association of Young Revolution-

ary Comrades.

In 1925 the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades in Siam had been founded at Ban Dong Village, Phichit County, Phitsanuloke Province, central Siam, where there was a large community of overseas Vietnamese. By 1927-1928, this organization had spread to Udon Thani, Sakon Nakhon and Nakhon Phanom prefectures of Udon Province in northeast Siam. As there were large numbers of overseas Vietnamese scattered throughout this province, the headquarters of the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades moved from Phichit to Udon.

In August 1928 President Ho came to Siam. After a period of investigation he proposed to set up the Udon Provincial Committee to provide unified leadership. The five members of the Committee were Dang Thai Thuyen (Canh Tan), Vo Van Kieu (Dinh), Tran Van Chan (Tang), Nguyen Van Du (Hai) and myself (the pseudonym I used was Nghia). Vo Tong (Sau) and Le Manh Trinh (Tien) remained in Phichit to direct activities there. Dang Thuc Hua went to Xiengmai and Lampang to set up new grass-roots organizations and thus was not a member on the Provincial Committee.

The Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades launched its activities among the masses through two organizations: the Co-operative Society and the Fraternity Society of Overseas Vietnamese.

The Co-operative Society was an organization of backbone activists of the masses that trained reserve forces for the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades. The patriotic youths it recruited were mostly young people from Viet Nam who were devoted to the revolution. Members of the Society led a collective life and engaged in collective labour, some doing farming and others specializing in sawing, carpentry, bricklaying and other trades. Part of the income they earned was used to cover their daily living expenses, while the rest was turned over to the Society to be used as fund for collective undertakings such as sending people abroad or back home, setting up schools, subsidizing certain student expenses and

paying the printing costs of propaganda and publications.

Later the Society also recruited some overseas Vietnamese residing permanently in Siam. These members were independently engaged in small businesses. In addition to paying membership dues regularly, each of them had to support either two or three children or a revolutionary cadre.

By the end of 1929 the total membership of the Co-operative Society of Overseas Vietnamese exceeded 100.

The Fraternity Society was a broad organization in the nature of a united front of overseas Vietnamese. It was set up almost in all the places where there were overseas Vietnamese. It had full members and associate members. The former attended regular meetings and paid membership dues. Most of them lived in Vietnamese communities. The latter were "old overseas Vietnamese" scattered in various places and unable to attend meetings. Though having lived in Siam for several generations and adopted Siamese nationality, they still cherished their Vietnamese ancestors and supported the Vietnamese revolution. They provided moral or material assistance to the Fraternity Society to the extent that they were able to.

In the communities of overseas Vietnamese, there were also organizations affiliated with the Fraternity Society, such as the associations of women, youth and children.

The propaganda and educational work of the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades in Siam included publishing newspapers, conducting training courses for young people, holding speech contests to encourage people to participate in and practise debate and oratory, sponsoring discussions on political issues, and organizing ceremonies commemorating patriots like Pham Hong Thai and Nguyen Si Sach, the Day of National Humiliation (the signing of the Patenote Treaty), and so on. At these functions, plays were often performed.

The Association also mailed newspapers, books and other material back to Viet Nam and helped the organizations at home to send cadres to Siam and China to participate in

revolutionary activities or to receive training to become revolutionary cadres. In 1927 we sent some people to Laos to establish a branch of the Association in Vientiane. At the same time, we set up a liaison network that included the towns of Savannakhet, Thakhek and Vientiane in Laos and the nearby towns of Mucdahan, Nakhon and Noongkhai in Siam. Thanks to Comrade Vo Mai's efforts to set up a liaison network in Siam, contact between revolutionary organizations in Siam and in Viet Nam became increasingly frequent.

The activities of the young revolutionary comrades in Siam had some impact in Viet Nam. In June 1928 the Viet Nam Nationalist Party sent three delegates, Nguyen Ngoc Son, Ho Van Mich and Nguyen Van Tiem, to Siam, asking the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades in Siam to provide them with arms and ammunition for an insurrection in Viet Nam. Representatives of our organization met with them and candidly discussed the matter with them. We also invited them to take part in activities commemorating the martyr Pham Hong Thai and to visit a few places where patriotic overseas Vietnamese were conducting activities there. At the same time we explained to them that we could not provide them with those things because conditions were not ripe yet for launching insurrection and, furthermore, we had to wait for approval by the general headquarters of our organization in China. Later all three were arrested after returning to Viet Nam and they confessed everything.

As a leading member of the Association, I participated in discussions on various major issues and I also often wrote articles for the *Than Ai* (*Fraternity*), a newsletter of the Fraternity Society, organized speech contests, commemoration ceremonies and drama soirees.

To celebrate the Tet of 1929, I wrote a play entitled *People Who Went Abroad* and staged it in Udon with some comrades. Time has erased my memory of the story, but I still remember a dialogue between a teacher and his student:

Teacher: The French are leading a decadent life in Viet Nam. Why, they even spend as much as 30 or 40

dong a month to feed their dogs!

Student: What's your monthly salary, teacher?

Teacher (Blushing, then cooling down immediately): My monthly salary is only 12 dong and the superintendent in the French-Vietnamese School in the county earns no more than 30 dong a month.

From 1928 to 1929 the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades, the Co-operative Society and the Fraternity Society were making great headway. This was the result of the concerted efforts of us all, including senior leaders like Phan Boi Chau and Dang Tu Kinh, and young people coming from Viet Nam and the training class. But it was Dang Thuc Hua who had become one with the overseas Vietnamese in Siam, who held him in high esteem and usually referred to him as "the Granddad who travels on foot" or "the teacher who travels on foot".

To illustrate the contributions made by Dang Thuc Hua, I would like to quote some paragraphs from Chapter Two of the book *Revolutionary Activities of Overseas Vietnamese in Thailand*:

> It can be said that among those who had already been patriots prior to the founding of the Party, Dang Thuc Hua was one who persevered in the revolution until the very end and kept in step with its progress.
>
> He started off by taking part in the activities in support of the Emperor and sympathizing with the constitutional monarchy of Prince Cuong De, later he stood for dissolving the Reform Society and establishing the Society for Breaking the Foreign Yoke, which advocated bourgeois democracy. He finally took part in the Communist revolutionary movement led by the working class.
>
> The changes in Dang Thuc Hua were not the result of a passive process but, rather, the result of a continual process of reflection on and understanding of the inevit-

ability of the revolution.

Dang Thuc Hua left Viet Nam in 1908, arrived in Siam in 1909, and in 1910, when Phan Boi Chau was carrying out his activities in Siam, became one of the founders of the Ban Tham Farm, where he stayed and worked till he had to leave the place.

From 1911 to 1912 when he was in charge of the Ban Tham Farm, Dang Thuc Hua set up the "Children's Battalion" to bring up and educate the children from Vietnamese families that hated the French colonial authorities as well as the children of patriotic Vietnamese residing in Laos and Siam. His purpose was to teach the children to speak Vietnamese, acquire more knowledge and learn production skills, with stress on patriotism so that they would take part in the revolutionary movements for national salvation when they grew up.

When the First World War broke out some time later, the Siamese government became an ally of France and thus the patriotic movement of overseas Vietnamese in Siam met with great difficulties. Owing to intervention by the French government, Dang Thuc Hua's "Children's Battalion" had to move to Ban Dong in Phichit Province. In 1916 under pressure from France, the Siamese government ordered all the Vietnamese in Ban Dong to leave within five days. The French troops would come and arrest anyone who refused to do so and confiscate his property, and the Siamese authorities, on their part, would bear no responsibility at all. According to the unequal treaty signed between France and Siam, France enjoyed extra-territorial rights in Siam and could punish the Vietnamese residing there because the French authorities regarded them as being within their sphere of sovereignty. Consequently, Dang Thuc Hua had to take these children to China to continue their schooling, where he stayed until 1919.

During that period some provinces under the revolutionary regime in China fell into the hands of warlords.

After the outbreak of World War I the warlords in Guangxi hunted for Vietnamese revolutionaries and arrested Phan Boi Chau and others. The military actions initiated by the Society for Breaking the Foreign Yoke at home and in China and Siam all flopped.

Having witnessed the changes in the situation over the years since he had embarked on the path of revolution, Dang realized that to carry out the Vietnamese revolution the revolutionaries should not rely on external assistance, nor should they do it in the way of the Society for Breaking the Foreign Yoke that for so many years had known nothing but military insurrections. After consulting with Phan Boi Chau, he returned to Siam and decided to wage a long-term struggle, but this time to rely on the people themselves.

Dang returned to Phichit in 1919 and exchanged views with Dang Tu Kinh on the principles of the work needed for national salvation. But there were big differences in their views. Dang Tu Kinh stuck to his original proposal, namely, to make Prince Cuong De leader of the alliance and establish a "provisional government" in order to solicit assistance from the Emperor of Japan. With regard to overseas Vietnamese, Dang Tu Kinh maintained that since these Vietnamese had been living abroad, they lacked information needed to discuss national affairs. Dang Thuc Hua was opposed to all these views held by Dang Tu Kinh, holding that to maintain allegiance to the Prince and depend on the Emperor of Japan was outdated. He stood for relying on the overseas Vietnamese and bringing them together through education, thus laying a permanent foundation for the revolution.

Dang Thuc Hua was a proponent of "Ten years of propagation and ten years of education", a policy adopted by King Gou Jian of the Spring and Autumn Period in the Chinese history (770-476 B.C.) to recover his lost state. He felt that this expressed his will as well as what he was doing. He assiduously put what he advocated in

practice.

When meeting with comrades of the Society for Breaking the Foreign Yoke, Dang Thuc Hua never concealed his views. He criticized the belief that the Japanese government would help the Vietnamese revolution, pointing out that this was a trick of Japan to use the signboard of "the same culture and same race" to cover up its ambition of "becoming the big Asian brother". When the Japanese government helped Phan Boi Chau to train young Vietnamese patriots, it saw to it that they learn how to speak Japanese and understand how great Japan was; its real intention was to take over France's place in Viet Nam and turn those who studied in Japan into their lackeys in the future. Facts had proved that there was no difference between the tyrannical yoke of Japanese imperialism in Korea and the rule of French imperialism in Viet Nam. He often reminded others to bear in mind the bitter lesson: when the Japanese government made a compromise with the French government, it ordered all the patriotic Vietnamese students in Japan to leave the country in 24 hours and it was only after Phan Boi Chau and other students had protested that the deadline was extended for one week.

Dang Thuc Hua once compared the cause of national salvation of the Vietnamese exiles in Siam to a ship sailing in unknown waters. He said that we were not afraid so much of the ship turning over as of losing its bearing or sailing against the current.

Before a definite road had been discerned, Dang Thuc Hua called for laying a permanent foundation among the Vietnamese residing in Siam. He often told friends who shared his aspirations that to become one with the overseas Vietnamese, we should be wherever they were and be their servants instead of their sages. He proposed that the Vietnamese in Siam live together in villages so that they could help each other, make a living together, maintain their fine ethnic traditions and cus-

toms and, above all, see that their children do not forget their mother tongue or their ancestral home. Only in this way would it be possible to mobilize them to participate in the endeavour to save the nation.

To realize the above, he made nothing of hardship to travel from place to place where there were overseas Vietnamese, working among them and giving them guidance. Because he had visited so many places on foot, he was known among the Vietnamese in Siam as "the Granddad who travels on foot" or "the teacher who travels on foot". He did his travelling almost always on foot, visiting one place after another where Vietnamese resided, as far as the poor and remote corners of northeast Siam where there were scattered communities of Vietnamese. Wherever he went, he encouraged people to unite, love and help each other and never forget the humiliation of being a subjugated people.

Dang Thuc Hua arranged for people sharing the same ideals to go to various parts of Siam to do organizational work:

—He arranged for Mrs. Nho (Dang Quynh Anh) and a few other people to go to Phichit County to reorganize the grass-roots organization in Ban Dong.

—He sent Ngoet Vinh to expand the organization in Vatpa and Noongseng not far from Nakhon City which was on the bank of the Mekong River and opposite Thakhek City in Laos. Next, he sent the two elderly men Le Khoan and Ngoet Dai to establish contact in Ban May and Ban Phung about 5 km away from Nakhon.

—He sent Mr. Chau to expand the organization in Udon. Then, he sent a few people to establish contact in Noong Bua, 3 km from Udon, and the mountainous area of Dong On, more than 10 km from Udon.

Later, Dang Thuc Hua and some other people established more organizations in Ban Han and Noong Han, two towns on the road from Udon to Sakon, and in Thaket and Cuxuman, two towns on the road from Sakon

to Nakhon, and spread the organization as far as Uthen, Nake, That Phanom, Mucdahan and Noong Khai along the Mekong River.

Thanks to the persistent efforts made by Dang Thuc Hua and other comrades over the years, the Vietnamese residing scattered across Siam gradually came together and began to maintain closer contact with each other.

Every year Dang Thuc Hua would go the rounds visiting Vietnamese all the way from Pacnampho in the north to provinces in the northeast. Everywhere he went, he would inspire his compatriots with patriotism. He would explain to them the necessity of preserving their fine traditional values and customs as well as stress the importance of educating the youth of tomorrow. He called on these overseas Vietnamese to observe and respect local customs and laws. And he worked and lived the way an ordinary person did. Hence, he was not only respected by his compatriots but also loved by the Siamese people, who affectionately referred to him as "the sun-tanned old man".

Once, the French colonialists tried to track down and arrest Dang Thuc Hua, but the Siamese local authorities and people tipped him off beforehand, urging him to go into hiding. On another occasion the French authorities negotiated with the Siamese government with the aim of securing the aid of the latter in the arrest of Dang Thuc Hua. The local authorities dared not refuse but required, instead, that positive identification was necessary in order to avoid arresting a wrong person. They had Dang Thuc Hua sit with a group of old men, and the French authorities could not identify him because he was swarthy and looked like a Siamese. He was thus extricated from danger once again.

In 1919 Dang Thuc Hua had started to connect with Vietnamese in Siam and also figured out a route that could be taken by those youths who were sent from Viet Nam to Siam for training and then to China to engage in

revolutionary activities.

From 1920 on many patriotic youths arrived in Siam. They were first received by grass-roots overseas Vietnamese organizations in Nakhon and Udon, later transferred to Phichit to live on Dang Thuc Hua's farm for some time, and then finally brought to China by liaison men, each with a certain amount of money for the journey. Some of them, like Dang Thai Thuyen, stayed behind to work in Siam.

In 1923 several youths, namely, Pham Hong Thai, Le Hong Phong, Le Tan Anh and Ho Tung Mau, all of whom went to China via Siam, freed themselves of Phan Boi Chau's influence and founded the Heart-to-Heart Society. In 1924 in Shamian Pham Hong Thai threw a bomb at Merlin, the French Governor-General of Indo-China, an event that had great repercussions throughout the country and gave added momentum to the revolutionary movement. Then, President Ho arrived in China and helped the comrades of the Heart-to-Heart Society to form an Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades.

From 1920 to 1925 several scores of people came to Siam by groups. Most of them went on to China while the rest stayed behind to help organize Vietnamese residing in Siam.

The two proposals raised by Dang Thuc Hua, to make the revolutionary movement take root among the overseas Vietnamese and to mobilize youths to go abroad, contributed enormously to the growth of the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades in Guangzhou and then in Siam.

Of course the work was not done by Dang Thuc Hua alone. His comrades Kim, Sau, (Vo Tong), Mrs. Nho, Thuyen, Vinh, Khoan and Ngoet Dai were all capable cadres serving as the backbone among the masses. They, for their part, had made great contributions to the realization of Dang Thuc Hua's correct ideas.

In 1925 when President Ho sent people to set up a branch of the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades in Siam, Dang Thuc Hua was one of the leaders of the branch. He enjoyed high prestige in the branch and among the Vietnamese residing in Siam.

In 1928 and 1929 President Ho came to Siam to carry on revolutionary activities, and he had an exceptionally high opinion of Mr. Dang Thuc Hua's moral character and his work among the Vietnamese there. By then the various patriotic organizations of overseas Vietnamese had grown and were in good shape. However, Dang Thuc Hua still emphasized the need to lay a permanent foundation. He asked President Ho and the leading organs to let him go to Xiengmai, Xiengrai and Lampang in north Siam bordering on Burma and Laos to develop the organization so as to prepare a base for future activities there. He said: "I'm glad to see that our compatriots have formed, expanded and consolidated their own organizations. As the revolution is bound to meet with difficulties, we should establish more bases. Just as an old Vietnamese saying goes, 'the clever hare has three burrows', we should have additional bases for future use." So naturally President Ho and other comrades agreed to let him go to Xiengmai.

He was not present when the Party was founded in 1930, but he had the honour of being one of the earliest members accepted into the Communist Party in Siam. He fell ill in Xiengmai in 1931 and died in Udon not long after his return at the age of 61. During his lifetime he gave his all to the cause of national liberation, and the compatriots and cadres in Siam cherished his memory dearly. His contributions will be forever recorded in the annals of the Vietnamese revolution.

II. President Ho Chi Minh in Siam

President Ho visited Siam twice, the first time from August 1928 to September 1929 and the second time from March to April 1930.

When I studied at the training course in Guangzhou, President Ho gave us lectures on basic theories of the revolution. When he came to Siam in 1928, I had the privilege of having close contact with him and on many occasions worked directly under his guidance.

President Ho arrived in Udon in August 1928. It had taken him 15 days to cover the distance from Phichit on foot. He had travelled on foot so as to be able to better understand the conditions of the overseas Vietnamese and at the same time to maintain anonymity.

After arriving in Udon, he assumed the name of Chin. He was only 38 then, and although most of us were quite young, we all recognized that he was extraordinarily experienced and was an example for us all to follow. We held him in high esteem and addressed him as Thau Chin. Only the few of us who had attended the training course in Guangzhou knew that he was Nguyen Ai Quoc.

During his stay in Udon, President Ho often went to work in Noong Bua, where the Co-operative Society met.

When meeting with the cadres and masses in Udon, he would often explain the situation at home and abroad and also exchange views with senior cadres on revolutionary work.

At that time revolutionary organizations in Udon had grown considerably. For instance, the membership of the Co-operative Society had reached a few dozens, while membership in the Fraternity Society of Overseas Vietnamese was in the hundreds. *Dong Thanh*, organ of the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades, was widely circulated among the masses. However, some young people in the Co-operative Society maintained that Siam was only a temporary place for their activities and that sooner or later they would either go to China to learn how to conduct revolutionary

movement or go back to Viet Nam to work. Consequently, few of them had ever given much thought to either learning the local language or maintaining contact with the Siamese people even though they had lived in Siam for such a long time. Others who harboured extreme views said that they had come to Siam to make revolution but had ended up doing hard manual work, tilling the land, planting trees and sawing the logs, just what the common people did to eke out a living. Still others began to waver and attempted to go back to Viet Nam after the revolution had suffered setbacks—the failure of the Guangzhou Uprising in China, the massacre of Chinese Communists by Chiang Kai-shek and the arrest of Vietnamese cadres in China.

President Ho often stressed the protracted nature of the revolution when talking with the cadres and masses. He said that the revolution was bound to be victorious, but before the opportunity was ripe the revolutionaries should persevere in their struggle, stand the test of hardship, work among the masses to arouse them, and maintain a high degree of morale. He pointed out that the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades should expand and secure a solid mass following. In the past the Co-operative Society had only admitted youths coming from Viet Nam. He felt that they should also admit all those overseas Vietnamese who were devoted to the revolution. He proposed changing the name of the newsletter from *Dong Thanh* to *Than Ai* and urged the cadres to write articles easy to understand so that the newspaper could achieve a broader readership among the overseas Vietnamese. He also proposed sending the newspaper to those overseas Vietnamese who lived in different places. He argued that we should persuade more Siamese people to sympathize with the Vietnamese people and the Vietnamese revolution. He called on the overseas Vietnamese to respect the customs and habits of the local people and asked us to work hard to acquire recognized or semi-recognized status for conducting activities. He encouraged us to learn the Siamese language and took the lead in doing so himself. After a short period of time he could

already understand and speak some Siamese.

While working with young people of the Co-operative Society, he helped them to acquire a correct ideological understanding and daily life habits. When Vietnamese visited the Society, he would meet with them and inquire about their everyday problems as well as problems related to work. Sometimes the Vietnamese would come to talk with him, asking him to help resolve family problems.

President Ho also took part in physical labour along with the teachers and students in Noong On. On many occasions he attended classes together with the students and put forward questions for them to discuss in class.

The school offered a course of forensics which was designed to train the students' ability to debate at and address public assemblies. One day President Ho raised the question of whether the Vietnamese women should be liberated. A heated debate ensued. A majority of students maintained that they should be liberated, but some held that their liberation should be realized step by step because their political awareness was still low. Then President Ho said: "Now, let's invite Teacher Nghia to speak." I expressed my support for the view that women must be liberated. President Ho said smiling that the views of the majority were correct and that to make revolution it was essential to oppose all forms of oppression and exploitation, including oppression of women. He declared that it was, however, not for us to liberate the women but for our sisters to raise their revolutionary consciousness and fight for their own liberation. Women should not only fight for equal rights in all aspects of their everyday lives but also in economic, political and social spheres.

Every time President Ho participated in the discussion and raised questions, we learned a lot of new things and thus increased our own understanding of our revolutionary mission.

At the end of 1928 President Ho urged us to apply to the Siamese government for setting up a school in Noong Bua, which we did accordingly. After we secured the approval, many cadres and overseas Vietnamese set about building the

school. President Ho joined them, digging earth, levelling ground, carrying bricks and building the walls.

During his stay in Noong Bua, President Ho spent more time translating books on revolutionary theories for cadres and overseas Vietnamese to read. He translated *Historical Materialism*, *The ABC of Communism*, etc., changing the title of the first book to *History of Human Evolution*. He often asked me to work with him on translations. While he read the Chinese and translated it into Vietnamese out loud for me, I would write down the Vietnamese. Instead of sticking to the original text rigidly, he identified the main ideas and expressed them in simple, direct language to make it easier for the readers to comprehend and remember them. When a paragraph had been translated, he would have it read aloud and would retranslate it if it was not readily understood by those present.

After a brief stay in Udon, President Ho went to Sakon where there was a larger population of overseas Vietnamese and where revolutionary organizations such as the Co-operative Society, the Fraternity Society and children's schools had been set up.

As in Udon, President Ho led a simple, tightly planned life in Sakon. Being close to the masses, he had more opportunities to be together with the Vietnamese there. Some of the Vietnamese families revered Tran Hung Dao as a saint, worshipped gods and spirits and believed in sorcery. They treated illness by using the ashes of incense and "magic water". On seeing this, President Ho wrote a song about Tran Hung Dao, national hero of the Tran Dynasty who stood up to the enemy and saved the country. One stanza of the song went as follows:

A pledge was taken in the Dien Hong Hall:
The entire people were ready to die for the country.
Should anyone dare to invade our territory,
He would surely be eliminated.
So long as one man remained,
He would protect every inch of our land.

It was a very effective means of enlightening; in fact, the

song became very well known among the overseas Vietnamese community. "Saint" Tran, who "had conquered the devils and subdued the demons", was restored to a national hero and savior such as he had been. Many of his devoted followers became members of the Fraternity Society.

After staying in Sakon for a period of time, President Ho went to Nakhon where he continued to work with the members of the Co-operative Society and among the masses as he had done in Udon and Sakon. He paid special attention to establishing contacts with comrades at home. Sometimes he would sail with Nguyen Tai along the Mekong River to see how things were with the overseas Vietnamese living on the Laotian side of the river. While in Udon, he once visited Noong Khai together with me and invited Chu and Mau from Vientiane to discuss work in Laos and the possibility of establishing contact between Laos and Siam, so as to push forward the revolutionary movement back in Viet Nam.

In May 1929 a split occurred at the congress of the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades convened by Ho Tung Mau in Hongkong. Quoc Anh (Tran Van Cung), Kim Ton and others walked out to return to Viet Nam to found the Communist Party. The remaining delegates were in favour of expelling them from the Association. Two delegates from the Association in Siam Vo Tong and Dang Thai Thuyen proposed to solicit the views of Old Comrade Vuong (President Ho) before deciding whether to expel them or not, but their proposal was rejected by the congress. After returning to Siam, Vo and Dang reported the split and the subsequent decision made by the Hongkong congress to President Ho. President Ho suggested that the Siamese branch postpone announcing the decision of the congress and at the same time he tried to bring the various Communist organizations together.

Later, around early September 1929, President Ho left Siam to ask for instructions from the East Bureau of the Communist International. The Bureau assigned him the task of uniting the various Communist organizations in Viet Nam;

this he accomplished after convening a meeting in Hongkong of representatives of the various organizations.

At the end of March 1930, after exchanging views with Communists of Chinese origin in Bangkok, President Ho went to Udon to inform the Provincial Committee of the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades of the merger of the various Vietnamese Communist organizations and relayed the views of the Communist International regarding the founding of the Siamese Communist Party.

The Udon Provincial Committee of the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades was the centre of revolutionary activity for Vietnamese residing in Siam. Dinh, Tang, Hai and myself (using the name of Duong) were members of the Committee. Dang Thai Thuyen, secretary of the Committee, had been arrested in Bangkok not long ago.

At a meeting with the Provincial Committee, President Ho told us that the split between the Indo-Chinese Communist Organization and the Annamese Communist Organization had been properly reconciled. Representatives of the two organizations had met in Hongkong, reached an agreement on unification and merged on January 6, 1930 to form the Communist Party of Viet Nam. The Party adopted a platform, a working plan and a simple constitution, and unanimously agreed to admit the Indo-Chinese Communist Federation into the Communist Party. The latter organization had been invited to participate in the conference on unification but, due to unexpected obstacle on the way, was unable to reach the venue for the conference.

One explanation must be made here concerning the date of the founding of the Party. When President Ho said that the Party was founded on January 6, he didn't make it clear that it was the lunar calendar. As everyone present thought it to be the solar calendar, January 6 was thus made the anniversary day for the founding of the Party. This lasted until 1960 when records provided by the Soviet Union showed that the Communist Party of Viet Nam was founded on February 3, 1930,

instead of January 6. Accordingly, the Third National Congress of the Party held at the end of 1960 decided to make February 3, 1930 the founding date of the Party.

President Ho told the Association of the Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades in Siam that according to the guidelines of the resolution adopted by the Communist International, Communists should participate in the proletarian revolutionary activities of the country where they resided. Therefore, Vietnamese Communists living in Siam had the duty of helping the oppressed and exploited people there to engage in revolutionary activities. That was what proletarian internationalism meant. Communists not only should take to heart revolution in their own country, they also should make contributions to the international proletarian revolution. (This was a resolution the Communist International had made in the past. After it was dissolved in 1943, this no longer was kept as a common demand of Communists in different parts of the world.)

President Ho suggested that the Provincial Committee invite outstanding members of the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades to join the Communist Party of Siam. After listening to the introductory remarks and explanation made by President Ho and realizing that there was already the Communist Party at home to lead the revolutionary cause and we ourselves would also become members of the Communist Party, we members of the Udon Provincial Committee were delighted. However, we were to become members of the Communist Party of Siam, and not of the Communist Party of Viet Nam. For us, it was quite natural that the members of the Association would become members of the Communist Party because over the years the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades had been spreading ideas of socialist revolution, following the example of the Russian October Revolution and working under the guidance of Comrade Nguyen Ai Guoc, a veteran revolutionary of the Communist International.

A few days later the Provincial Committee called a meeting of leading members of the Association to listen to a speech

by Comrade Nguyen Ai Quoc.

President Ho repeated what he had told us a few days ago. He said that the Vietnamese revolutionaries living in Siam then should work in the interests of the Siamese revolution. Analysing social conditions in Siam, he said that since Siam was still a semi-colonial, feudal country, it was improper to carry out socialist revolution straight away. It was necessary, instead, to conduct a new-type bourgeois-democratic revolution under the leadership of the proletariat. After this new-democratic revolution, the Siamese revolution could then switch to socialist revolution with the assistance of the world revolutionary forces, without having to go through a capitalist stage.

Ho's remarks prompted considerable discussion. Some comrades feared that after becoming members of the Siamese Communist Party, they would be unable to make contributions to the Vietnamese revolution and thus lose the sympathy of their Vietnamese compatriots in Siam. President Ho resolved the doubts one by one, to the satisfaction of everyone.

After the meeting, he exchanged views with the members of the Provincial Committee and discussed with them specific organizational problems.

He proposed making the Provincial Committee of the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades into a Provincial Committee of the Vietnamese Communists in Siam. As the former Secretary of the Provincial Committee Dang Thai Thuyen had been arrested, we elected Comrade Dinh to fill his post.

President Ho advised us to admit as the first group of Communists those who had high revolutionary enthusiasm, fine moral quality and wholehearted dedication to Communist ideals. Later, he suggested that the Provincial Committee send Comrade Tang in his capacity as representative of the organization of the Vietnamese Communists in Siam to go with him to get in touch with the Communist organization of overseas Chinese in Siam to discuss the possibility of establishing the Siamese Communist Party.

In April 1930 President Ho and Tang arrived in Bangkok. Before his departure, he enjoined the Udon Provincial Committee to get in touch with the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades in Laos and help the latter become a branch of the Communist Party in Laos.

On April 20, 1930 President Ho, in his capacity as representative of the Communist International, convened a conference in Bangkok at which the founding of the Siamese Communist Party was announced and the Provisional Central Executive Committee (later referred to as the Siam Committee) elected. Tang, member of the Udon Provincial Committee, and Ngo Chinh Quoc, a Vietnamese born in Siam, were elected to the Executive Committee.

After the founding of the Siamese Communist Party, President Ho went to Malaya and helped the local comrades there to establish the Malayan Communist Party. Since April 1930 he never again returned to Siam.

In his two visits to Siam, President Ho accomplished tasks of great historic significance. In addition to helping the revolutionaries in Siam to form the Siamese Communist Party, he trained a generation of revolutionary cadres among the Vietnamese in Siam, impressed on everyone the protracted and arduous nature of the revolution, cemented friendship between the Vietnamese revolutionaries and the Siamese people, fostered proletarian internationalism among the Vietnamese revolutionaries residing in Siam, and helped in planting the seeds of revolution in the hearts and minds of the Siamese people.

III. Revolutionary Activities Under the Leadership of the Siamese Communist Party

After President Ho left Siam, Comrade Tang returned to Udon to report to the Provincial Committee on the conference held in Bangkok on April 20, 1930, at which the Siamese Communist Party was founded and a decision was made re-

garding the specific tasks of the sub-group of the overseas Vietnamese of the Siamese Communist Party.

According to the division of work made by the Siam Committee, the Udon Provincial Committee was responsible for carrying out revolutionary activities in northeast Siam. Tang placed particular importance on the view held by President Ho that special attention must be paid to the selection of the first group of people to be admitted into the Party. In order that everyone could have an opportunity to express his views on the matter, the Provincial Committee decided to organize an in-house discussion on whether members of the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades should become members of the Siamese Communist Party.

Most of the comrades accepted the proposed merger except for two or three people, who feared that if they worked for the Siamese revolution they might lose the sympathy of the overseas Vietnamese and might be persecuted by the Siamese government. The Provincial Committee explained to the effect that revolutionaries were persecuted regardless of where they were or whether they were Vietnamese or Siamese, that the oppressed and exploited people would always be in favour of communism, and that Communists, thus, should mobilize and lead the people on the road to revolution.

After that the Provincial Committee prepared a list of a few dozen outstanding backbone activists to be recruited as the first group.

In October 1930 the Provincial Committee convened a meeting of the Vietnamese Party members from Udon Thani, Sakon Nakhon and Nakhon Phanom at a place near the provincial capital of Udon to decide on the guiding principles for work and the orientation of activities. Not a single comrade from Phichit attended the meeting because the authorities there were persecuting revolutionaries after one of their secret agents who had been tracking Vo Tong and Dang Thai Thuyen had vanished. Almost all the comrades were arrested while 11 comrades including Le Manh Trinh had gone to Hongkong after being expelled from Siam.

At the meeting, on behalf of the Siam Committee, Comrade Ua gave an account of how the Siamese Communist Party was founded. He also announced that the Udon Provincial Committee had officially become part of the Siamese Communist Party, with the responsibility of leading the work in northeast Siam.

To implement the new line, the Udon Provincial Committee called a special meeting to discuss problems relating to work among Vietnamese residing in Siam.

Once specific principles had been formulated, everyone plunged into work with great zeal and vigour. Most of the members of the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades and many young activists of the Co-operative Society were admitted into the Party. They fervently studied Siamese in order to get to know and understand the Siamese people. Bich (alias Thien) and Huong (alias Xom) even entered local schools and became quite proficient in Siamese.

The Communist Youth League was first set up in Udon, spreading to other parts of Siam later.

When the Secretary of the Udon Provincial Committee Dinh died of illness in 1931, I was elected to succeed him. By then I was already fairly fluent in Siamese, and so the Committee asked me to be in charge of the Youth League as well as of propaganda.

At the end of 1931 a White terror reigned in Viet Nam. As the Nghe-Tinh Soviet Movement met with a lot of difficulties, some of the comrades on the Ha Tinh Provincial Committee came to Siam with Bui Khuong as their guide to ask for instructions from the Party. From then on the Vietnamese Communist organization in Siam assumed another important task of supporting the revolution in Indo-China.

The Provincial Committee had two tasks: arousing the masses to take part in revolution and supporting the revolution in Indo-China.

I shall not go into detail about the work of arousing the masses to make revolution because it was done entirely under the leadership of the Siam Committee. Here I will only discuss

the work done in support of the Indo-Chinese revolution.

The Siam Committee entrusted the work of supporting the Indo-Chinese revolution to the Overseas Vietnamese Party organization in Siam.

After Bui Khuong (Lieu Han), Le Loc, Tran Xu and some other comrades arrived in Siam from Ha Tinh, the Provincial Committee arranged for them to rest in Udon and give a briefing on the situation in Viet Nam. It happened that Comrade Tan Anh had also come to Siam via Burma after being deported by the authorities in Yunnan Province in China. Being a leading cadre of the Headquarters of the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades, he had attended the conference at which various Vietnamese organizations were merged into the Communist Party of Viet Nam. The comrades working in Siam had deep trust in him, knowing that he had been very capable, had worked with President Ho and gained his trust. After exchanging views, both the Provincial Committee and Comrade Tan Anh agreed that a leading team should be formed consisting of a few comrades of the Siamese Communist Party and those comrades who had just arrived from Viet Nam and assuming the responsibility for rallying support for the Indo-Chinese revolution. Specifically, the team was charged with the following tasks:

—to provide food, accommodation and other basic necessities for those comrades who pulled out of the country as well as to guarantee their safety.

—to organize training classes for those who were lacking in theoretical knowledge and work experience so that they would be able to do a better job when they returned home in future.

—to create conditions for the comrades who pulled out of the country to return to the Fatherland and resume work there as soon as possible.

With regard to contact between these comrades and the Central Committee of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party (at the end of 1930 the Communist Party of Viet Nam changed its

name to the Indo-Chinese Communist Party), the Provincial Committee would report to the Siam Committee and would ask the latter to help by all possible means. Later, we arranged for Comrade Tan Anh to go to China and notify the Siam Committee of these arrangements. The Committee firmly regarded the gathering of support for the Indo-Chinese revolution as an international mission of the Siamese Communist Party and delegated this responsibility to the Udon Provincial Committee.

In early 1932 the Udon Provincial Committee assigned Tien and Hai to set up the Department for Assisting Indo-China with a view to promoting the work in various fields. After a period of work, the Department achieved the following results:

It provided the means of subsistence to the comrades who had pulled out of the country.

It mobilized overseas Vietnamese to provide food and accommodation to cadres who had withdrawn to Siam and donate more than 5,000 bap to support the revolution at home. (The exchange rate between the Siamese currency and the Indo-Chinese currency was one to one.)

Among those who had withdrawn to Siam there were participants in the Nghe-Tinh Soviet Movement as well as revolutionaries of the Nghe An Dawn Group who held views which differed from those of the Nghe An Provincial Committee. In addition, there were people who had been pursued by the French authorities for engaging in revolutionary activities in Laos. They were all provided with food and accommodation and other necessities by the overseas Vietnamese before they were arranged to take part in production and earn their own living expenses while waiting for the opportunity to return home.

It organized training classes for them.

Most of the comrades who had come to Siam were full of enthusiasm, but they had not had the opportunity to study revolutionary theories because they had been busy with the struggle and with avoiding enemy persecution. We used the

political platform of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party and the Programme of the Party's Mass Organization brought here by Le Loc and Tran Xu as the main study documents to raise the level of their theoretical understanding and improve their method of work. These documents were also very valuable to the comrades in Siam because since the founding of the Siamese Communist Party, the Siam Committee had not worked out a clearly defined programme or Party constitution. Therefore, many Party members of Vietnamese origin residing in Siam studied together with the comrades who had come from Viet Nam. Besides, the Provincial Committee provided some documents which were not available or difficult to come by at home, such as *The Road of Revolution, Diary on Board the Sinking Ship, The Example of Russia* and *The History of Human Evolution*. They were all either written or edited by President Ho, who used them as the basis for his lectures to comrades residing in Siam in 1928 and 1929.

The method of study was for the trainees to read the documents and then discuss their contents in the light of practical realities. The instructors would only bring up points that deserved particular attention and deduce conclusions. As Comrades Le Loc, Tran Xu and others, former members of the Ha Tinh Provincial Committee, had a higher level of understanding, they not only attended the lectures but also served as instructors. In keeping with the principle of secrecy, we put the comrades from the Dawn Group, from Laos and from Nghe Tinh in different classes.

It sent some comrades home to continue their revolutionary activities.

Before sending those cadres home, we held a meeting in Banmay, Nakhon, which was attended by Hai, Tien, Le Loc, Tran Xu, Bui Khuong and others. As Secretary of the Udon Provincial Committee, I also attended it. At the meeting Hai announced that the Siam Committee had agreed to the establishment of a Central Executive Committee of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party that would exercise direct control over all the work of the Party. The members of the Committee

were Hai, Tien, Le Loc, Tran Xu and Bui Khuong, with Hai as Secretary. I felt what they were doing was at variance with the resolution adopted by the Siam Committee, which declared that "the Siam Committee will help establish contact between those comrades who had come to Siam from Viet Nam and the Central Committee of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party". But since Hai insisted that they were acting exactly in accordance with the resolution of the Siam Committee, I just listened without making any comment.

After the establishment of the central organ of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, Hai often went to Nakhon to meet with people from Thakhek of Laos. I did not concern myself with this matter as I had always considered it a matter which concerned only the Indo-Chinese Party. However, not long after hearing my report on the matter, the Siam Committee declared that Hai had acted on his own assumptions and certainly not in accordance with the resolution of the Committee. They instructed him to make a self-criticism, before taking disciplinary measures against him, dismissing him from his post in the Department for Assisting Indo-China.

In April 1932 Le Loc and some other comrades returned home. They were arrested a few weeks after their return before they were able to carry out any activities. Not long afterwards, Bui Khuong was sent back to find out what was really going on, but before he could do anything, he was exposed and had to return to Siam.

At the beginning of 1933 the Party sent Comrade Tran Xu back to Ha Tinh. He was also arrested not long after he had restored work there.

After the comrades from Ha Tinh had been arrested, the Udon Provincial Committee decided to reorganize the Department for Assisting Indo-China. Tien, Ba Doc and Tai became leading members and carried on various kinds of work. Tien was appointed head of the group.

At the end of 1933 the Department sent Hoang Lun to find out what the situation at home was like. He worked energetically and set up a training class with 15 trainees. But

later he fell so seriously ill that he was sent to the Vinh City Hospital, where he died soon.

In 1934 Ba Doc and Bui Khuong returned to Nghe Tinh. Bui Khuong carried out activities in Ha Tinh but was shortly arrested. Ba Doc established contacts in Nghe An with those who had not been arrested and those who had just been released from prison and together with them formed the Nghe An Provincial Committee. He also succeeded in contacting the Department for Assisting Indo-China in Siam.

In 1935 the First Congress of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party was convened in Macao, and Ba Doc attended the Congress as representative of the Trung Ky.

It promoted the revolutionary movement in Laos.

In 1930 the Udon Provincial Committee helped the Vientiane Branch of the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades to set up a branch of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party. When the revolutionary movement in Laos was suppressed, the Department for Assisting Indo-China sent Chan and Chi to carry out activities in Boneng and Phongchiu there and get in touch with the overseas Vietnamese organizations in Thakhek, Savannakhet and Pakse.

In September 1934 the Department for Assisting Indo-China, which exercised leadership over the Party organizations in Vientiane, Phongchiu, Boneng, Thakhek, Savannakhet and Pakse, sent its representative to attend a conference at which the Provisional Party Committee was set up for the Laotian Region.

When the Indo-Chinese Communist Party convened its First Congress in Macao, the Party Committee of the Laotian Region sent Nguyen Van Xo to attend the Congress as representative from Laos.

The fact that the Overseas Headquarters of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party held its First Congress in Macao in March 1935 indicated the great contributions the Udon Provincial Committee had made in consolidating the ranks of the Party.

There were also some changes in the composition of the Committee of the Siamese Communist Party. At the end of 1933, when Ngo Chinh Quoc was arrested in Bangkok and extradited to the French authorities by the Siamese authorities, I was appointed member of the Siam Committee and sent to Bangkok to take a direct part in the work of the Committee. I was very excited about going, but finding a job in Bangkok was no easy matter. When I taught in northeast Siam earlier, I was provided with food and accommodation by the organization and sometimes also received a subsidy of four or five dong from the comrades of the Co-operative Society. Now that I was transferred to Bangkok, I was given 40 dong which included expenses for food and lodging. This was a general provision applicable to all comrades, including those sent by the organization to work independently in far-away places for a long period of time.

The language did not pose a problem to me in Bangkok because I had been studying the Siamese language earnestly ever since I became a member of the Siamese Communist Party in 1930. While teaching myself Siamese, I also was having young people with a better command of the language help me improve my pronunciation. I often read aloud textbooks and articles from news dailies to these young people, who would correct my pronunciation and intonation. Then I would read aloud several times sentence by sentence, taking pains to enunciate each word as clearly as the announcers on radio did. I still remember now in 1933 when Praya Pahol Polpayuhasena became Prime Minister of Siam I practised for several weeks to pronounce his name the way the native Siamese did.

The most difficult thing was how to earn a living. As I was born in a poor scholar's family, I had been in school up until the time I threw myself into revolutionary activities and, thus, had no special skills at all.

When I first arrived in Bangkok, the Siam Committee arranged for me to stay with a Chinese who taught at a private school. Soon I found out that his income was even not enough for him to pay the rent and support the family. So I decided

to try my best to find a job. After giving the matter some thought, I came to the conclusion that selling newspapers required neither much skill nor capital and that doing it I not only could support myself but also maintain close contact with the masses. With only 40 dong in my pocket, I had no other choice but to take up this job.

At that time there were two daily newspapers in Bangkok. One could purchase from the newspaper company for half a cent per copy and sold for one cent on the street, while the other newspaper, the larger of the two, could be bought for three cents and sold for five.

At first I was not used to selling newspapers on the street. There were just too many people. The first day I purchased 50 copies of the smaller newspaper. Carrying them under my arm like a student carrying his schoolbag, I peddled them from house to house. I sold them all in two hours, earning a total of 25 cents.

But this way of selling only lasted for a few days, for nobody would buy the newspaper any more, even brought to the house. So I had to hawk my stuff in the streets like the others. I tried to peddle in the streets where there were fewer people. In two or three days' time, I got used to selling on streets with more people.

The newspaper sellers usually got up early in the morning and purchased several hundred copies of newspaper from the distribution centre and hurried off to different places to sell them, earning two or three dong a day that sufficed to support their families. But for me, a daily earning of 50 to 60 cents would be enough for my living. So I didn't have to compete with other friends selling newspapers. Every morning when I got to the distribution centre, I would first of all buy a copy to see if there was any interesting news. If there was, I would take 30 or 40 copies of the larger newspaper; otherwise, I would just take 20 or 25 copies. I would then walk leisurely down the street and bellow out the major news headlines in a clear voice. In this way, I could still sell newspapers in the streets where other newspaper sellers had already been. On the average I

could earn 50 to 60 cents and sometimes even one dong a day. Thus I achieved self-sufficiency materially. In fact, it wasn't such a bad life. Every month, I spent 2 dong on rent, 3 to 5 on meals in restaurants, a dong and fifty on cigarettes and the rest for tram fares and pocket money when carrying out activities as well as spending for emergency needs. I spent 3 hours each day selling newspapers, after which I would go back to take a bath and did my laundry. Then I would go to a public square or to a park to relax and enjoy myself. Sometimes I would continue to do my own work.

At that time Tang and I were the only Vietnamese cadres in Bangkok. As the Secretary of the Siam Committee was ill, Tang served as Acting Secretary responsible for maintaining contact with the Overseas Headquarters of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party and for the work of supporting the Indo-Chinese revolution, while I was in charge of propaganda work for the Siam Committee. I was not very busy, apart from keeping tabs on the newspapers and magazines published by Party organizations in various places and translating articles written by Party members of Chinese origin on the occasion of March 8 International Women's Day, May Day and the October Revolution into Siamese. Also, I conducted oral propaganda while selling newspapers or being together with Siamese workers and peasants.

In 1934 the Siamese revolutionary movement gathered some momentum. Three strikes staged respectively by rice-mill workers, railway workers and automobile drivers broke out in Bangkok. The majority of the strikers were Chinese but there were some Siamese workers too. The strikes were more or less spontaneous and the Party members of Chinese origin only played a subordinate role.

In the northeastern region the Vietnamese Party members had a closer working relationship with the Siamese. Although small in membership, organizations like the Communist Youth League, the trade unions and the peasant associations had already sprung up in various places, and there had been some small-scale struggles waged by the peasants for reduced

taxes and against forced labour. What warranted special attention was the opposition put up by several hundred students of the Khorat Secondary Normal School to the harsh boarding school system and to its ban on newspapers. The struggle succeeded finally in compelling the school authorities to make concessions.

The struggle of the masses as a whole had made some headway but it lacked a clear-cut direction. Activities usually remained limited to distributing leaflets and hanging red flags on certain "red-letter" days having an international import or to gathering a small number of people and urging them to become militant revolutionaries.

The Siamese authorities began to persecute the Communist Party in 1932. In Bangkok some Chinese Communists, even though their realm of activities was confined to the Chinese community, were arrested. But it was easier for them to find concealment because there was a large number of Chinese in Bangkok (about one million). In the northeastern region most of the overseas Vietnamese lived in Nakhon, Sakon and Udon, and every time there was revolutionary activity in these areas overseas Vietnamese would get arrested because the authorities believed that only overseas Vietnamese would carry out such activities. It often happened that when the policemen picked up leaflets on the streets, they would then break into the homes of overseas Vietnamese and arrest them. This put the Vietnamese on tenterhooks. If it went on like this, they worried, there would be fewer and fewer people because every time there were leaflets, there would be arrests. What was to be done in future? This question was on everybody's mind. It was not until 1936-1937 that people in the Bangkhoang Prison raised this question for discussion, but nothing came of it. Some of them held that nothing could be achieved through any discussion conducted in the absence of the Siam Committee.

In 1934 the Party's Overseas Headquarters in Hongkong sent newspapers to Siam from time to time. The newspaper *Bon-se-vich* (*Bolsheviks*) advocated uncompromising spirit in struggle. One article in it even criticized a comrade who

maintained that it was not appropriate for Party organizations that had just resumed activities to organize mass struggle, accusing him of having Rightist ideas.

Although I knew little about strategy and tactics at the time, I somehow maintained that covert activities were possible in Chinese communities or back in Viet Nam where there were thousands of people. But in northeast Siam there were only 20,000 to 30,000 overseas Vietnamese altogether, and there were only a few thousands in Udon, Sakon and Nakhon where there were larger communities of overseas Vietnamese. The mass following in these areas would certainly fall apart in the event of suppression by the Siamese authorities. Therefore, before Tang left for Hongkong to attend the enlarged meeting to be held by the Overseas Headquarters of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party in May 1934, I told him of what I thought about and asked him to convey my views to the leading comrades of the Party. But when Tang returned to Bangkok, he repeated what the *Bon-se-vich* advocated, insisting that we continue to fight till the last man. It was not until summer 1935 when I met Comrade Ha Huy Tap did I get the opportunity to explain my ideas fully to him.

I was in charge of propaganda work in the Siam Committee in Bangkok for more than a year. I did some work during the period but I suffered from severe headaches on several occasions. I started to have this trouble as early as 1923 when I attended the county school. I would feel head pains and dizziness when I was exposed to scorching sun, and so I always had to wear sun-glasses. I also suffered from this trouble while I was in the training class in Guangzhou and had to take medicine every day. I was hospitalized because of acute headache three times during my two years' stay in Bangkok. So, I made application to the Siam Committee to go to China for treatment because I thought medical treatment there might be better than in Siam and that I could go to Mr. Ho Hoc Lam, a patriot from my hometown, and ask for his help.

In early March 1935, with the approval and help of the Siam Committee, I left Bangkok for China.

Part Three

YEARS OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES IN CHINA

(1935-1942)

I had been to China in 1926, staying for two months in Guangzhou where I attended a training class and joined the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades. This time, with the approval of the Siam Committee, I went to China for medical treatment. But due to unforeseeable changes, I had to stay and work in China for seven years from 1935 through 1942. For the convenience of narrating, I have divided this period of time into two stages. The first stage covers my activities from Nanjing to Kunming and the second from Kunming to Pac Bo.

The First Period FROM NANJING TO KUNMING

(1935-1939)

The time framework for this first stage of my activities is from March 1935, when I left Siam, to the beginning of 1939. Events will be narrated in the following order:

I. On my way to Nanjing.

II. The new environment and work.

III. My life and struggle in Nanjing.

IV. Remaining in China after losing contact with the Siam Committee.

I. On My Way to Nanjing

At the beginning of 1935, with the approval of the Siam Committee I went to China for medical treatment. I went by ship with White-haired Tang to Hongkong.

This was the first time I had ever travelled on an ocean-going ship. Looking at the infinite expanse of the sky and the sea, I felt that my future was full of brightness and hope.

As the ship began to approach Hongkong, White-haired Tang took me to the deck. Leaning against the railing, he told me: "Once we arrive in Hongkong, we shall have to part company. I am familiar with the place and understand the local dialect. I won't have any problem. Although you are not familiar with the place and do not know the language, that won't be much of a problem either. As soon as the ship anchors, many small boats and steam-boats will come to send the passengers ashore. Just get on board any one of the steam-boats, and it will take you to a hotel. There you can buy a copy of *Commerce* and find out the date of ships going to Shanghai in the ship schedule advertisement section. Then you can book a ticket to Shanghai. Buy the cheapest ticket for the ship that is berthed in the British concession, never for a ship in the French concession, just to avoid trouble. After arriving in Shanghai, you go by rickshaw to the North Station where trains from Shanghai to Nanjing depart. Once in Nanjing, you should take a rickshaw to No. 10 Sanshanli where Mr. Ho Hoc Lam lives."

It was easier said than done. When I got on board the ship going to Shanghai, I was at a loss what to do. Generally, passengers who travelled steerage would bring with them salted turnips and fermented bean curd as well as their own bedding. They would come early and get the best seats, away from the

wind, where it was less bumpy. But I did not know this. When I went down the steerage, I was astonished to find that all the best seats had already been taken and covered with bedding. The seats that remained vacant were in the draught along the passage way. The weather in early spring was quite chilly. I shivered with the cold sea wind, not knowing at all how to cope with the situation.

An elderly lady from Guangdong Province guessed my uneasiness. After greeting her, I told her that I was an overseas Chinese from Guangdong and that this was my first visit back to China. She was very sympathetic to me and tried her best to help me. She called a deck hand over and gave him two yuan to rent a folding bed for me and another five yuan to order me five days' meals. She also lent me a quilt. Throughout the journey, when I had difficulties, she was always ready to help.

When the ship reached Shantou (Swatow), it stopped for several hours there. More passengers came on board, and supplies of food were brought on board for the passengers. Suddenly, a girl came up to me and presented me with a fan. I could not understand why in such cold weather she would want to offer me a fan. Fortunately, the elderly lady said something to the girl in Cantonese, after which the girl walked away looking for other passengers to whom she could offer the fan. But nobody accepted the fan, let alone spoke to her. Finally, a middle-aged man took the fan, unfolding it and saying something to the girl, who turned and beckoned to a musician. The man played a musical instrument while the girl sang. It was quite nice and all the passengers appreciated it. After she finished singing, the middle-aged man gave her a few *jiao*. Only then did I realize that the girl was singing for a living. On her fan were written the names of songs which people could select for her to sing.

When the ship reached Shanghai, I saw blocks of tall buildings and motor vehicles shuttling through the broad streets. On the banks of the river were huge crowds of people. Being glad and yet worried, I was in no mood to enjoy the

dazzling place. As the ship turned to cast anchor, to my surprise I saw a three-coloured flag hanging out a building. What bad luck! This was the French concession! I could not believe what had happened. When I had bought the ticket, I had been told the ship would berth in the British concession, but now it was anchoring at the French concession! Such being the case, I had to be calm and think of a way out.

I had heard that President Ho had once been robbed in Shanghai. He had also just come up from Hongkong. When the ship anchored, he hired a horse-driven cart. But this cart was used by robbers. They drove him into a narrow lane, where they ordered him to go inside a house at the end of the lane. Then several men started to search him, but they only found five yuan. Cursing him "beggar", they gave him a punch and threw him out. Knowing the tricks of robbers in Shanghai, he had hidden his several hundred yuan in his socks. So the robbers didn't find the money. This time I, too, had hidden my money in a safe place. I was afraid not of robbers in Shanghai but of troubles that might happen in the French concession.

After I got ashore, carrying a footlocker containing a few articles of underwear, I walked past a long queue of rickshaws waiting to carry passengers. I looked calm, as though I were quite familiar with the place. After I had walked several hundred metres, I saw an old man unhurriedly pulling a vacant rickshaw. He looked kind and honest. I waved at him to come over. After I got on, I took from my pocket a slip of paper on which I had written the words "North Station" and showed it to him. He nodded and set off. After we had gone several blocks, a robust-looking man with an empty rickshaw suddenly came up and walked side by side with us. The two men exchanged a few words. Being scared, I started to think of ways how to deal with them when they came to a halt. The old man pointed at his rickshaw with two fingers and then extended his palm before me. I immediately understood that he charged twenty cents. Only then did I realize that because the North Station was too long a distance away for the old man, so he had asked the other man to take me there. This was not unusual

among the rickshaw pullers.

We went several more blocks from the French concession to the Chinese district. After a little while the Chinese characters "North Station" on a building came into sight. This was the Shanghai station. The man stopped in front of the building and asked me for the fare. I gave him forty cents which I had changed on the ship, but he shook his head. I gave him another twenty cents and he again shook his head. Then I added twenty cents more. Nodding his head, the man smiled this time and pulled his rickshaw away.

At the North Station it took me around three hours to buy a train ticket for Nanjing. When the train began to pull into Xiaguan Station in Nanjing, many hotel attendants jumped on the train to get people to stay in their respective hotels. A man came up to me and asked whether I needed a hotel room. I nodded and he stuck a hotel label on my footlocker. His hotel arranged everything from the station to the hotel.

It was a medium-bracket hotel located in a lane about one kilometre away from the station. I arrived at seven or eight o'clock in the evening. An attendant showed me to my room, and after a while supper was served in my room. When I was about to go to bed, a woman came in with a red-lacquered wooden bucket, put it under my bed and left without saying a word. After a while another woman came in. I thought that she was an attendant too and had come to clean the room. But she came up and sat beside me, smiling and embracing me. Then I understood that she was a prostitute. I stood up and gently pushed her out of the room. I closed the door and looked around the room before going to bed.

Having reached Nanjing, my destination, I did not have to worry about any political mishaps. But what would I do tomorrow? Would I be able to find Mr. Ho Hoc Lam with the directions given by White-haired Tang? What was I to do should I fail to find him? I thought and thought till late at night.

When I got up the next morning, I got everything ready to leave. At seven or eight o'clock, an attendant knocked at the door and came in to inquire whether I wanted to have breakfast. I shook my head and then showed him a note, which said that I needed help to hire a rickshaw to take me to No. 10 Sanshanli. After reading the note, he went out and came back with a bill, which read as follows:

Room rent : 3 yuan
Supper: 1.5 yuan
Luggage delivery: 0.5 yuan
Wooden bucket: 0.5 yuan

I did not know what the wooden bucket was. So I put a question mark beside this item. He pointed at the red-lacquered wooden bucket. I asked him what that was for. Smiling, he removed the lid of the bucket, looked into the bucket, covered it again, and then crossed out that item. I paid him five yuan, which to me was an incredibly large sum of money. Later I learned that the wooden bucket was a nightstool.

It was about nine kilometres from Xiaguan to Mr. Ho Hoc Lam's place. It would have cost me ten cents if I had gone by bus. Going by rickshaw would, of course, cost me more. However, by taking a rickshaw I was able to enjoy the scenery along the way. An hour or so later the rickshaw took me to Mr. Ho's home at Sanshanli. I paid the fare, went up to the house and rang the door buzzer. A middle-aged lady opened the door. It was Mrs. Ho. She spoke to me in Chinese, which I could not understand. So I asked her in Vietnamese, "Is this Mr. Ho's home?" Realizing that I was Vietnamese, she asked me in Vietnamese, "Where do you come from? Is there anything I can do for you? Whom are you looking for?" I told her that I was Mr. Ho Hoc Lam's relative and, since I was in the neighbourhood, had come to pay him a visit. Mrs. Ho, thereupon, took me inside the house. It happened to be Sunday, and Mr. Ho was at home.

He was from my hometown. His grandfather Mr. Ho Ba On had once been an inspector of justice in Nam Dinh Province. Ho Ba On was killed in 1883 in defending the city of

Nam Dinh against French aggressors. He was also Comrade Ho Tung Mau's uncle. His mother was Mrs. Lua who had taken an active part in the scholars' uprising against the French and had remained loyal despite being tortured by the enemy. When I was 16 or 17, I often went to Mrs. Lua's home to listen to the stories she told about the revolution. So I knew her family quite well. When I met Mr. Ho Hoc Lam this time, I told him how everybody in his family was and about the situation in our village and in the country as a whole. I also conveyed to him messages from his mother who had asked me to do before I left Viet Nam. We talked for quite some time, after which Ho Hoc Lam persuaded me to stay at his home.

II. The New Environment and Work

At that time there were 20 or 30 Vietnamese in Nanjing. Some were engaged in revolutionary activities, such as Le Thiet Hung, the fiance of Ho Hoc Lam's daughter, and Cao Hong Lanh who had just come from Viet Nam and was now staying with the family of an overseas Chinese; some sympathized with and supported the Party, such as the Ho Hoc Lams and Viet Nam Nationalist Party members like Dong A, Do Dang Trinh, Le Quoc Tru (Black Tru) and Tu Chi Kien (Long Cong) who were from Yunnan and were opposed to Nguyen The Nghiep, Vu Hong Khanh and their like; some assumed an equivocal attitude, such as Tran Trong Khac who had just come from fascist Germany; and there was also Dang Nguyen Hung who had once been a French spy in Siam. In addition, there was an office of the Viet Nam Nationalist Party headed by Vi Dang Tuong (alias Vi Chinh Nam) and Nghiem Ke To, a young man who was going to attend a school run by Chiang Kai-shek for training special agents. Dang Nguyen Hung, Tran Trong Khac and Ho Hoc Lam shared the same house. Le Thiet Hung was a platoon leader in a transportation corps and he went back home once every two or three weeks.

In April 1935 Hai and Van came. Hai had attended the Guangzhou training class together with me in 1926. Later, he

was given the opportunity to study in the Soviet Union. Van was a comrade from Siam who, being influenced by the Party, had joined in distributing leaflets denouncing the dictatorial government of Siam. I had met him several times in Bangkok.

After a while, I exchanged views with Hai, and we decided to start a training course in Ho Hoc Lam's home. Cao Hong Lanh, a few members of the Viet Nam Nationalist Party who sympathized with the Communist Party, and myself attended the classes, and Hao was our instructor.

After a month I felt I had learned a lot. It was now ten years since I had first joined the revolution (including my training in Guangzhou). This time I systematically studied revolutionary theories, such as the nature of our revolution, the main force of the revolution, the allies of the revolution, united front policies, revolutionary struggles in the Soviet Union, basic problems of Marxism-Leninism and dialectical materialism. After each class, I would give a summary to Van in Thai.

In August 1935, Cap, Truat, Dai, Ky (Hoang Sam), Trinh, Duc, Loc and Luan who had been expelled by the Siamese government arrived from Bangkok. Previously, Mr. Ho Hoc Lam only bore the food expenses for the few of us. But now with eight more people, he had to bear most of the extra burden. He never complained about it; on the contrary, he often told us not to worry about this.

In about Sptember 1935, Mr. Short (Ha Huy Tap) came to Nanjing. He was the representative of the Party's Overseas Headquarters. I had wished to see him for such a long time.

When I appealed to the Siam Committee for its approval to allow me to go to China for medical treatment some time back, my intention had been to ask Mr. Ho Hoc Lam to help me find a hospital which would treat me for the headaches I had been having for more than ten years. But what was more important to me was to have a chance to meet with comrades of the Party's leading organs and get their views on the revolutionary work in Siam.

In fact, as soon as representatives of the Communist

International helped found the Siamese Communist Party in 1930, they hurried away to Malaya, having no time to give specific work directives. However, the Party organization of overseas Vietnamese in Siam did a very good job in assisting the Indo-Chinese revolution. So far so good. But nothing was made clear as to how the Vietnamese Party members should work for the Siamese revolution in a way that was suited to the actual conditions of the overseas Vietnamese. After Dinh died in 1931, I became secretary of the Udon Provincial Party Committee. I went to work in Bangkok in 1933 and became a member of the Siam Committee in charge of propaganda work. Actually, like White-haired Tang, who was the first Vietnamese member of the Siam Committee at the time of its establishment, I felt confused too, not knowing how to start my work.

In 1934 the Party's Overseas Headquarters was founded in Hongkong. I consulted with White-haired Tang and then decided to send a cadre to give a work report to the Headquarters and ask them for directives. After the man returned, he was ambiguous about what he had done. He did not tell us that the Headquarters had given us 500 dollars, which he had pocketed and spent as he wished. Later, White-haired Tang went to the Headquarters. After he came back to Bangkok, I asked him what people at the Headquarters had said about how the overseas Vietnamese Party organization should carry out revolutionary work in Siam. He only said, "We should act in accordance with what the *Bon-se-vich* advocated: continue to fight till the last man."

The year 1934 was a year of White terror for the overseas Vietnamese in Siam. In Nakhon, Uthon, Phanom, Muongmuc and other places, the Siamese police slipped leaflets into the homes of overseas Vietnamese and then used the leaflets as an excuse to make arrests. According to White-haired Tang, the Communist International had entrusted the Overseas Headquarters with the task of helping and guiding the Malayan and Siamese Communist Parties, and he now told me that the Headquarters hoped that the focus of the overseas Vietnamese activities would remain unchanged. I wondered whether or not

Tang had exaggerated the achievements of the Siamese Party and, at the same time, minimized the difficulties when he reported work to the Headquarters. With this in mind, I had decided to ask the Siam Committee to allow me to go to China for medical treatment. Once in China, I would have the opportunity to meet with people from the Headquarters.

That was why I was delighted to see Mr. Short. It was the best opportunity for me to make a report to my superiors about the revolutionary work in Siam.

On meeting with Mr. Short, I introduced myself to him and told him that I had received permission from the Siam Committee to come to China for treatment. He said, "We have learned of your personal history and your request." Then I said, "I'm sure you know about my background, but you might not know about all my requests. Let me explain:

> I have asked the Siam Committee to allow me to come to China where Mr. Ho Hoc Lam could help to arrange for me to see a doctor. But with the lapse of time, I realized that this would not be possible, because Mr. Ho does not earn much money. Besides, there are ten or more people who have no jobs and have to depend on him for financial support. Secondly, the medical service here in Nanjing is quite bad. When in Bangkok, I went to a hospital several times which gave me special consideration as a kind of "charity", reducing the hospital and medical charges in my case. These and the meal expenses were about the same as the expenses for a hospitalized patient. But here in Nanjing there is no such "sliding fee scale". In the Central Hospital and the Drum Tower Hospital where the medical facilities are relatively good, the daily expense is at least five to seven silver dollars. Where could I get such a large sum of money for treatment? So I no longer think about seeing doctors.

Mr. Short said,

> We have also talked about your medical treatment and planned to send you, Van and Hai to the Soviet Union. There, you can study while receiving medical

treatment. And you can also help Van with his studies. Hai told me you are quite capable. However, transportation is a problem: it is not easy getting to the Soviet Union for the time being. You will have to wait a while.

I said,

I am very happy with this plan. But I have one more request. I wish to say a few words about problems concerning the line and policies adopted for the revolution in Siam.

In 1930 the Siamese Communist Party was formed mainly by the overseas Chinese and overseas Vietnamese Party organizations. The overseas Chinese comrades did not have a stable mass following or much influence among the Siamese people, whereas the overseas Vietnamese had great influence among them. When Siamese people wanted to oppose unfair taxation and resist forced labour, they consulted Vietnamese cadres, asking these cadres to lead their struggle. Progressive teachers in educational circles had a high opinion of our work and hoped that we would help them in their struggle. Vietnamese-Siamese were ready to follow us. The number of Party members who were Siamese was not great. The total number of overseas Vietnamese living in Siam was 30,000, of which we had organized only a few thousands. The majority of these people lived in Udon, Sakon and Nakhon Phanom that were under the control of the Siamese authorities. I was not in favour of using the same methods as we had used in the past—handing out leaflets on important occasions such as the anniversaries of the October Revolution, the Guangzhou Uprising, the founding of the Nghe An Soviet and the International Labour Day; holding shopkeepers' strikes even if there were only 20 or 30 people; and staging demonstrations if there were 200 or 300 people. The Siamese government could take advantage of these activities by slipping leaflets into the doors of the overseas Vietnamese, thus to frame them up and arrest them, or worse still, arrest all the overseas Vietnamese as they did

in September 1930 in Phichit of Phitsanuloke. If that should happen, it would be difficult for our revolutionary organizations at the grass-roots level to survive or to make contributions to the Siamese revolution, and their support for the Indo-Chinese revolution would also be adversely affected.

I have told White-haired Tang about these views of mine and urged him to report all this to the Headquarters. But I don't know whether he has told you of these things or not."

Mr. Short said,

Yes, he did. But he did not raise the questions in such explicit terms as you have done. You have made things very clear to me, and I feel there are quite a few points worthy of further deliberation. So I can't give you a reply here and now. We have to discuss the matter before letting you know the result.

After we talked about the work of the Siamese Party, Mr. Short asked for my opinions on Mr. Ho Hoc Lam's proposal to establish a revolutionary organization in Nanjing.

I said,

Mr. Ho has exchanged views on the matter with Hai and myself. His aim is to secure legal political status for us as well as to get help from the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang. To my mind, it will be fine if we can realize these goals under the present circumstances. I have noticed that Hai has been particularly interested in these matters and has been very active. What can his real motive be? Somehow I don't quite trust the man.

Surprised, Mr. Short cut me short and asked why.

I replied,

In 1926 he and I together attended the Guangzhou Training Course. He then went under the initials "P.V.". At that time I felt he was only interested in having a good time. Then I lost contact with him for several years. When we met again, I thought he must have mended his ways. But these last few months I have come to notice that there

are many things in him which do not fit in with the requirements for a revolutionary.

He is loose with women. He'll say sexually provocative things to women. One evening we went to a park. Seeing a young woman sitting on a stone bench, he ran up and sat down beside her, which made Van and me quite embarrassed. On another occasion, he saw a girl student coming towards us in the street. He walked quickly forward and grabbed the girl's hand. He had even talked about his affairs with other women to flaunt his womanizing proclivities. Once, he went so far as to brag about his wife. For instance, he told us how his wife had flirted with a policeman on board a train from Hanoi to Nam Dinh and thus avoided being questioned by him.

He lacks a principled stand in struggle. First, about the conflict between him and Tran Trong Khac. Tran went to Japan during the Travel-to-the-East Movement. Later he was expelled by Japan and came to China. With the help of Mr. Phan Boi Chau, he went to Germany to study medicine. After graduation he became a doctor and returned to China. Here he was helped by Chen Yi, a former schoolmate and Governor of Fujian Province, who gave him several thousand yuan. He intended to open a clinic with the money. He knew that people from his hometown who were deported from Siam for engaging in revolutionary activities were having financial difficulties. He also knew that these people were being supported by Mr. Ho Hoc Lam alone, but he pretended not to know. When Van was running a fever, being kept in bed just outside his room, he never took the trouble to ask about Van's health. His theory was that patients needed doctors, and not the other way round. This kind of person is really bad and should be criticized. One day Hai discussed with several of us, suggesting that we use force to make him help us financially. I did not like the idea, but people from Yunnan did. In my absence and with the support of Mrs. Ho Hoc Lam, Hai went over with those people from Yunnan to threaten Tran Trong Khac. When I came back, I heard people upstairs stamping their

feet. I rushed there and found Hai and others brandishing weapons and staring angrily at Tran Trong Khac. Scared out of his wits, Tran agreed to offer 20 yuan. I felt this would be politically unprincipled and that if I did not intervene right there, the Party's prestige would be weakened. So I stepped forward and said, "Mr. Tran, we are now in difficulties here and are badly in need of help. But our Party has never advocated using threats to get help from others. Please take your money back. We won't accept it unless you are willing to offer it of your own accord. Comrades, what you were about to do is not in line with the Party's principles. Let's go downstairs and see what we can do." Upon this, those from Yunnan left and so did Hai.

Hai also had conflict with Dang Nguyen Hung. One day, Dang Nguyen Hung invited those from Yunnan to dinner at a restaurant, with the aim of sowing discord between them and the Party. They told us about the invitation and wanted to know our opinions on the matter. We advised them to refuse Dang's invitation outright, but Hai said they should accept it and order the most expensive dishes at the restaurant so as to "bleed him" financially. The political consciousness of the Yunnan people was not high enough. They were willing to do what the Party would like them to, but they lacked experience in actual participation in political activities. They thought that Hai was a capable leader, so they accepted his suggestion. On the day before the dinner party was to be held, they went to the restaurant to see from the menu what the best dishes and wines were offered. But Dang Nguyen Hung was not to be tricked. When others were choosing dishes, he sat there saying nothing. Then he went to the kitchen and told the cook to prepare some cheap dishes. When the waiter brought over two bottles of wine and opened one of them, he seized the other bottle. Having read the label, he said that bottle should not be opened. So their plan backfired. They all stood up cursing Dang Nguyen Hung and walked out. This was no doubt a heavy blow to Dang. But from a

political point of view, an upright man would not have acted like that.

There is something fishy about his political activities. One day Hai told me that they (meaning comrades from the Party's Overseas Headquarters) said they would come. But several months had elapsed without anyone showing up. Maybe something untoward had happened to them in Hongkong. We should take the Yunnan people to Shanghai and find out what the situation in Hongkong was. I told him that such action should not be taken unless they got permission from the Party. But Hai would not listen to me—in fact he had instructed the people from Yunnan to get their mimeograph machine and luggage ready to leave. I discussed the matter with Le Thiet Hung. We both agreed that we should try to dissuade them. Because if anything happened, we would be held responsible by the Party.

We talked the matter over with Hai and the others, pointing out that it would be extremely dangerous and, thus, ill-advised for them to go to Shanghai and that we could not approve of their going. In the first place the Party had never decided that it was necessary for them to go to Shanghai. But if they insisted on going, and if anything should happen, the Party would not take responsibility. The Yunnan people gave up the idea, and Hai himself had to give it up, too.

From these facts I believe that Hai may have become degenerated. But I don't know when you worked together with him whether or not you made the same discovery.

Mr. Short patted me on the shoulder and said, "Very good! You're really politically sharp. We didn't intend to tell you about him, but since you have already known something about him, let me tell you more:

In 1926, after he studied for some time in the Guangzhou Training Course, he was sent to the Soviet Union to study first political science and then radio-communication techniques. He stayed there for seven years. During this period he fell in love with a

Russian girl from a bourgeois family. In spite of the fact that his classmates and comrades all tried to persuade him not to marry the girl, he went ahead and married her.

After he mastered radio-communication techniques, he sent a telegram to the French Party, criticizing them for not giving full support to the Indo-Chinese revolution. Unable to make head or tail of it, the French Party asked the Soviet side to help clarify the matter. After quite some time it was found out that the telegram had been dispatched by him.

On his way back to Viet Nam the ship had to stop in Vladivostok (Haishenwai) and wait a long time. He took advantage of this and went back to Moscow to see his wife. Because of his unruly behaviour, we did not allow him to take part in the Party congress. Being angered by this, he secretly contacted the French consul in Hongkong in an attempt to have all the deputies arrested. The French consul promised him that if they succeeded, they would give him a reward of 50,000 dollars and a free trip to Europe. But he did not know that the Party congress was to be convened in Macao instead of Hongkong, so the French police went in vain. And he didn't stop at this either! He made efforts to infiltrate the ranks of the revolutionaries. However, we had already sent someone to keep an eye on him.

After the Party congress, we questioned him, and he acknowledged all that he had been doing. But he argued, 'I found that the Party was too poor, so I tried to get some money from the French for the Party.' We asked him, 'What are you going to do now?' He said, 'I'm going to write a letter to Pasquier (Governor-General of Indo-China). I will curse him and be done with it. After that, I hope you will let me go to the Soviet Union to join my wife. I will do anything the Party asks me to do.' We thought his request was a reasonable one, because it would be better for him to be with his wife. The following day he showed us his letter to Pasquier, the gist of which read as follows: 'I have been loyal to Communism. I wanted to cheat you of your money because I was having

financial difficulties. I never expected you to be so stupid as to regard it as a chance to sabotage the revolution.' On the back of the letter, he drew a man with his trousers down. Beside the illustration, he wrote: 'Pasquier is biting my....' We sent the letter to Pasquier and asked Hai to bring Van here and wait to go to the Soviet Union. It's very difficult now to go to the Soviet Union, and I don't know when they will be able to depart.

After telling me about Hai, Mr. Short continued: "I've come here to calm him down. At the same time I wish to know how the comrades who were expelled from Siam are. What do you think of them?"

I replied, "There were eight of them. Luan and Duc fled from Viet Nam in 1931. I've seen them only a couple of times. So I don't know much about them. As for the others, they are all fine Party members or non-Party people. Politically, we are quite safe here with Mr. Ho Hoc Lam. But it may not be appropriate to ask Mr. Ho to continue providing financial support. I don't know if it is possible to arrange for them to work in south China. Of course, it would be better if they all go; at least, we should arrange work for some of them. Otherwise, I hope you will give Mr. Ho some money to reduce his financial burdens."

Mr. Short said, "I've thought about that. We have a lot of difficulties in south China too. Although I can take some of them with me, the others have to remain here. You can ask Mr. Ho to help them find jobs here. Above all, they need political guidance. You should try to set Hai's mind at ease and keep an eye on him. As to Mr. Ho's plans to form a revolutionary organization, it is a good idea to register with the government. You can discuss this with Hai and help Mr. Ho to set up the organization. But you must see to it that it is an anti-imperialist organization of the masses. I have talked this over with Hai, so there is nothing for you to worry about."

A few days later Mr. Short left Nanjing with half of us, namely, Truat, Dai, Ky, Trinh, Dong A and Do Dang Trinh. The other half, including myself, continued to stay in Nanjing.

III. My Life and Struggle in Nanjing

When winter came, the pressing problem confronting us was providing living quarters for everyone. When they came to Nanjing, the comrades from Siam were put up at a poor peasant's place in Xinmin Village opposite the Yijiangmen Gate which was close to the Xiaguan Railway Station. It was at a distance of six or seven kilometres from Ho's place. The house was all right in summer, but in winter wind could blow in from all directions. Cap and I spent more than a month running around Nanjing until we finally found a cheap house in the downtown area not far from Ho's place. The rent, water and electricity cost six and a half yuan a month.

Next was the problem of winter clothing. Coming from tropical areas, we did not have winter clothing. This time I decided not to trouble Mr. Ho but to borrow some money from Dang Nguyen Hung. However, Dang said: "I have no money to lend you." The following day he gave Mrs. Ho 30 yuan and told her some things which were actually intended for us. He said, "Since they are Communists, they should know that he who does not work will get nothing to eat. I will support them for two months by giving them 15 yuan each month. If they fail to find jobs after two months, I will not give them any more help." Mrs. Ho handed the money over to me and conveyed his message. I said we were very thankful for Mr. and Mrs. Ho's help. Actually a man named Cuong De, who was not a revolutionary, mailed us 100 yuan to help when he learned that people from his hometown were living here. Dang Nguyen Hung, on his part, used the revolution to his own ends. We would never feel any gratitude towards him.

Cap and I searched the whole of Nanjing to buy winter clothes. Our money was not enough because prices had gone up. We had to wait until the end of the winter when prices went down. As a Vietnamese saying goes, "Wearing thin clothes in winter and thick ones in summer." That reflected the penury at the bottom of society. Now I came to understand the full meaning of the saying.

One day Mr. Ho asked Hai and myself to have a talk with him after lunch. He said, "Only a few of our people here have jobs, and we can't make ends meet. Nor are we gathered together under the auspices of a political organization which will represent us. Without legitimate political status, very little can be done. You and I have talked before about setting up a revolutionary organization and having it registered at the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang. At the same time, we should ask them to give us some help. It would be even better if they could help us to set up an office as they did for Vi Dang Tuong and others. Have you discussed this idea?" Hai and I replied that we had and that we all felt it would be wonderful if the idea could come true. We also told Mr. Ho that we planned to draft a charter for him to go over. If he thought the charter was okay, we would proceed with our plan. Delighted, he said, "Go ahead. I will go over the charter. Let's work together."

A few days later Hai finished drafting the charter in Vietnamese, which I translated into Chinese. The contents were similar to the charter of the Anti-Imperialist League, so the organization was named the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh (Vietnamese Independence League).

Mr. Ho praised it after he had read it. According to Chinese practice, he suggested to have a shorter name Viet Minh in addition to the full name.

We agreed and put forward the work plan which we had mapped out beforehand:

—Mr. Ho was to write a letter to invite Nguyen Hai Than and two or three more people in Guangzhou to come to Nanjing as representatives of the overseas Vietnamese in Guangdong.

—Ho Hoc Lam and Le Thiet Hung were to represent the overseas Vietnamese in Nanjing. Dang Nguyen Hung would serve as representative of the overseas Vietnamese in Nanjing too, if he was willing to do so.

—Le Quoc Tru and Tu Chi Kien would represent the

overseas Vietnamese in Yunnan.

—Dang Van Cap and I would represent the overseas Vietnamese from Siam.

—Hai would represent the overseas Vietnamese residing in France.

—Cao Hong Lanh would serve as representative from Viet Nam.

The editing of the Vietnamese and Chinese versions of the charter was soon completed.

Nguyen Hai Than came to Nanjing with an overseas Vietnamese named Vi. We showed Nguyen the charter and briefed him on the aims of this organization. Nguyen readily agreed with us and said gladly, "I'm sure the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang will help us. When the office is set up, I shall work here, instead of returning to Guangzhou to do fortune-telling."

At the beginning of 1936 Mr. Ho Hoc Lam wrote a letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang requesting a meeting. Ho Hoc Lam, Nguyen Hai Than, Hai, Le Quoc Tru and I went to the headquarters of the Chinese Kuomintang, where we were received by a spokesman for Chen Lifu, then Head of the Propaganda Department of the Kuomintang. After listening to our explanations, he accepted our application and promised to report the matter to Chen Lifu. Thus, the groundwork for the establishment of the Vietnamese Independence League was accomplished without a hitch.

Preparations for a conference at which to declare the founding of the Viet Minh were hectic. After some negotiations the conference was to be held in the meeting-room of a neighbourhood branch of the Chinese Kuomintang. Twenty people from the Vietnamese side, including Ho Hoc Lam and Nguyen Hai Than, were present. Two representatives of the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee were present from the Chinese side. Vi Dang Tuong, representative of the office of the Viet Nam Nationalist Party in Nanjing, was invited to

attend the conference. Dang Nguyen Hung declined the invitation.

Ho Hoc Lam delivered the opening speech, in which he gave a brief account of how the Viet Minh had been founded and announced that the charter had been registered with the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang. He then read out the charter and the manifesto. After that a representative of the Kuomintang (actually leader of the neighbourhood party branch) made a speech in which he congratulated the establishment of the League. He declared that Dr. Sun Yat-sen's last words had included admonitions to help the weak and small nations of the world. But the representative still insisted that Viet Nam had been China's dependent state in the past. Vi Dang Tuong also spoke at the conference. Leading members of the newly founded League were introduced (a *fait accompli* as no election was conducted), and they included Ho Hoc Lam and Nguyen Hai Than, myself and some others. The aim of the conference was simple: to obtain political legitimacy for the Viet Minh, or in other words, to obtain legitimate political status for people like us in Nanjing.

To publicize the active efforts of the Viet Minh, a broadsheet named the *Voice of Viet Nam* was published in Chinese, with the fund provided by Mr. Ho. It had a circulation of about 100 copies and was sent free of charge to various Kuomintang organs in Nanjing. A few dozens were sent to overseas Vietnamese in Guangzhou and in Kunming.

The efforts made by Mr. Ho were certainly instrumental in the founding of the Viet Minh: his contributions cannot be overestimated. I have already referred to his background above, and in the following paragraphs I'd like to further discuss the role he had played.

After the failure of the Travel-to-the-East Movement, Mr. Ho came to China from Japan. He travelled to many places, but most of the time he was with Phan Boi Chau until Phan was arrested. In 1927 when Chiang Kai-shek openly betrayed the revolution, our comrades in China met with many

difficulties. Mr. Ho was then a staff officer with the rank of lieutenant colonel in Chiang Kai-shek's General Staff Headquarters in Nanjing. He was neither a member of the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades nor a member of the Communist Party, but whenever one of our comrades was in danger or difficulty and sought his help, he would give him cover and generous assistance even though he knew the man was a Communist Party member.

In 1930 when Comrade Tan Anh (formerly known as Le Hong Son, from Thanh Chuong County in Nghe An Province) arrived in Yunnan under an assumed name Le Bat Quan, Vu Hong Khanh and company informed against him to the Yunnan authorities, and he was arrested. As soon as Mr. Ho learned of this, he went to see Zhu Peide, Chief of General Staff, asking him to cable Long Yun, Governor of Yunnan Province, to set Tan Anh free. Zhu told him that the Vietnamese youths in China were all Communists. Mr. Ho said frankly, "The chief purpose of the Vietnamese in coming to China is to enlist China's assistance to our fight against France. If the Kuomintang helps us, we shall follow the Kuomintang and if the Communist Party helps us, we shall follow the Communist Party. I do not know whether Le Bat Quan is a Communist Party member or not, but I do know clearly that he came from Japan with a mission given by Cuong De, the exiled Vietnamese prince in Japan. So he must be a patriot. Will the Chief of General Staff please cable Long Yun, Governor of Yunnan Province, to release him?" Zhu Peide pondered for a while and said, "You have a point there. I'd like you to draft a telegram for me." Mr. Ho drafted the telegram at once, which Zhu Peide sent with his signature. After he was released, Comrade Tan Anh was deported from China, being allowed to go to Burma in accordance with his wishes. Later he went to Siam to continue his revolutionary activities there.

In 1933 Comrade Dong A was arrested by gendarmes in Nanjing. He confessed that he had come to Nanjing to look for Mr. Ho Hoc Lam. When questioned by the gendarmes, Mr. Ho said, "Many Vietnamese in China know me, but I do not

necessarily know them. I can't tell whether I know this Mr. Dong or not unless you let me see him in person." When Mr. Ho saw Dong A, he did not know him. But when Mr. Ho learned that he really was a Vietnamese from Yunnan, he did everything to secure Dong's release on bail. Later, he even helped Dong enter the Cavalry School of the Chinese Kuomintang.

Mr. Ho served as a staff officer in the Kuomintang Army in Nanjing for eight years, remaining a Lieutenant Colonel all those years. People advised him to ask his classmates who had become high-ranking officials to promote him. He said, "I work here only to fill my stomach. I am satisfied if I have enough to eat, like 'the soldier who would rather die in trenches (a quotation from Mencius, an ancient Chinese philosopher)'. I do not want to be beholden to anyone just to get a promotion."

In 1940 he fell seriously ill and was hospitalized in Guilin, Guangxi Province. Bai Chongxi, one of his classmates, went to see him and told the director of the hospital to do everything in his realm to treat his illness and prescribe the best medicines; he, Bai Chongxi, would foot all the bills. In gratitude, Ho said to Bai, "Now, the Vietnamese revolution badly needs help. You are an important person, and I hope you will help the Vietnamese revolution. As for me, please just let the other classmates help me."

He was not a Communist but a confucianist. He duly practised such confucian virtues as "temperance, kindness, politeness, restraint and magnanimity", "rites, justice, honesty and integrity", "compassion", etc. He helped our Party and our comrades in many, many ways.

The fact that the Chinese Kuomintang knew very well that he was not a Communist was, in reality, a very effective cover to use to set up the Viet Minh.

At the time when we were working to found the Vietnamese Independence League, Chiang Kai-shek was launching a wild attack against the Communists. Although the mass movement demanding resistance to Japanese aggression had spread to all corners of China, Chiang Kai-shek stuck to his

reactionary slogans of "internal pacification before resistance to foreign invasion". He would "rather kill 100 innocent people than let one Communist slip". The gun shots which felled Communists at Yu Hua Tai in Nanjing went on unabated. Under such circumstances, some Vietnamese also informed against us, saying that we were Communists. Vi Dang Tuong hated us because we had won over to our side some of his "comrades". So did Dang Nguyen Hung who had done what he could to split us apart but had failed. It was these two men who provided the Kuomintang with intelligence on us in an attempt to sabotage the Viet Minh. The *Viet Thanh* had to stop publication after three or four issues because Mr. Ho had no money. Nguyen Hai Than tried everywhere to borrow money but to no avail. Finally he returned to Guangdong with the overseas Vietnamese named Vi. As a result, all activities stopped. The Vietnamese Independence League henceforth remained only a name in the registration book of the General Office of the Chinese Kuomintang's Central Executive Committee.

Four years later, i.e., at the end of 1940, the revolutionary situation changed. Under the direct leadership of President Ho, the Viet Minh Overseas Office was set up in Guilin, with Ho Hoc Lam serving as director and Pham Van Dong deputy director. When the Association of Comrades Working for the Chinese and the Vietnamese Revolution and Culture was set up, Ho and Pham became members of its executive council by virtue of their being, respectively, director and deputy director of the Viet Minh. It was only then that the Viet Minh became really active and people came to know the existence of the organization.

We had never expected the Chinese Kuomintang to provide us with any assistance in the Vietnamese revolution. Therefore, while engaging in revolutionary activities, we never forgot trying to find jobs for our people.

One day we sent Duc alone to go and see if Dang Nguyen Hung could help him to find a job. Seeing that Duc was a bit simple-minded and could be easily duped, Dang agreed to help but, to make things difficult, he raised several requirements

which were hard to fulfil. When Duc reported the matter to us, we were angry and were all in favour of exposing his true colours.

One night after the Tet, we all assembled at Mr. Ho's house. As Nguyen Hai Than had not gone back to Guangdong yet, he was also present. We sent one person to invite Mr. Ho and ask Mr. Ho to bring Dang Nguyen Hung along. Mr. Ho could say to Dang that we had something important to discuss with him. When Mr. Ho arrived at the house and saw all of us were there, he was very happy. But Dang became somewhat timid on seeing so many people, but he pretended to be calm and took a seat.

Duc spoke first, "Mr. Ho, Mr. Nguyen and all you others! We have been here for a long time without jobs. We feel ashamed that we have had to depend on Mr. Ho for so many things. A few days ago I asked Mr. Dang to help me find a job. He agreed but on the following conditions:

1. If I agreed to it, I could live in his house, cooking meals, preparing hot water, doing the laundry and cleaning the house. He would supply me with food, but I would have to eat separately.

2. He would give me a salary of two yuan each month, but the payment would not be made every month; instead, he would keep the money for me until I decided to quit.

3. Reading books and newspapers and social contact with others were forbidden in the house.

4. I would not be able to move into his house right now. I would have to wait and find an excuse to stay behind and move into his house when the others had left Nanjing, so that he would not be accused of trying to sow dissension among us.

These were really humiliating conditions. If I refused to work for him, I would have to continue to depend on Mr. Ho. If I worked for him, I would have to leave all of you and the revolution. What should I do? I hope you two gentlemen and everybody else will help me make a decision."

Dang Nguyen Hung stood up suddenly and said: "Have you finished your nonsense? I can tell everyone what I said to you." Having said that, he made his way to the door but Cap, Loc and Van already stood there with the door closed behind them. They gave Dang a long, hard stare, and Dang had to sit down silently, not daring to move.

As planned, one of us stood up and said,

Dang Nguyen Hung, you claimed that you could tell everyone whatever you said to revolutionaries. But can you do the same with what you said to enemy secret agents and imperialists? You undoubtedly will not. Today, in the presence of everyone, including these two gentlemen, I must bring the facts to light so that nobody will fail to see you for what you are.

You went to Siam together with many people, including Comrades Le Hong Phong and Ho Tung Mau. While the others were engaged in revolutionary activities, you tried to keep away from such activities, seeking after personal gain wherever you could. Under the pretext of acquiring more knowledge for the benefit of the country and the people, you went to study in a Christian school run by Americans. After graduation you set out to preach Christianity and wrote a letter to the Governor-General of Indo-China, offering to turn yourself in so as to be able to return home. When the Governor-General wanted you to turn over a new leaf, you agreed to act as a spy for Dong Hung, the French consul in Bangkok, for a monthly salary of 50 bap (Siamese currency). After graduation from the Land Force Academy of Siam, you were appointed a warrant officer, being posted in Khonquang, Udon Province, where you supplied the French authorities with information about Vietnamese revolutionary activities. After a while, because your activities there flopped, you had to leave Siam and came to China, where you duped Mr. Ho into helping you to find a job.

We've been very clear about what you've been up to but did not want to bring up your past activities as we thought that you had parted with the enemy and would

behave yourself more discreetly in the days to come. But it turned out that you went on with your counter-revolutionary activities. When some comrades were expelled by the authorities and came to China, you smeared the revolution before them, believing that they must have complaints to make about it. But what you got was a rebuttal from them. When other comrades came here from Yunnan, you tried to win them over, believing that they no longer supported the revolution. But in the end, again, you were exposed by them. You gave Mr. Ho 30 yuan to help us buy winter clothing but at the same time uttered some very uncourteous words which were not worth a rebuke. This time when Duc asked you to help him find a job, you went so far as to put forward such untenable conditions. Do you think you can insult the revolutionaries that way? On the contrary, you are only insulting yourself. I would advise you to behave yourself from now on and stop doing anything so underhanded and unscrupulous again.

As soon as the speaker had finished, Dang Nguyen Hung, seeing the door was open and he could get away, said in obvious embarrassment, "I've had enough," and squeezed out of the door, running straight upstairs.

While Nguyen Hai Than, lowering his head, said nothing, Mr. Ho, shaking his head, shot a disdainful glance at the man running up the stairs.

As none of us had found a job, we had to continue to depend on Mr. Ho for a living, though Ho himself was already hard up. Such being the case, we had to work out the most reasonable arrangements and do our utmost to lighten the burden on him. We found a small house for him at Erlangmiao and had Van help cook for him there. In this way, Mr. Ho could pay less rent and he did not have to hire anyone to do the household chores. Prior to that, two comrades from Yunnan had already found jobs in a laundry run by an overseas Chinese. And the six of us, namely, Hai, Cap, Duc, Loc, Luan and myself still lived in the small house we just rented in the winter. Thus, Mr. Ho's burden was lightened somewhat, and

the arrangement of our life was more reasonable than before. Hai didn't see eye to eye with us on this matter. Mr. Ho and Le Thiet Hung gave us 20 yuan each month, of which 6.5 yuan was to be spent on rent, water and electricity, and the rest on meals for the six of us. We were living from hand to mouth. Being used to an easy and comfortable life, Hai could not but put up with what we could afford. However, he often kept away from us, going out to wine and dine by himself and from time to time revealing his dissatisfaction with things.

August was the hottest month in Nanjing. It was so hot and life so hard that Hai could endure no longer. He told us what was on his mind: he wanted to go to Shanghai and asked us to help him. We agreed and asked Mr. Ho to give him 15 yuan.

We learned later that he taught dancing to girls at a night club. In 1937 it was reported in the newspapers at home that he had been arrested and sentenced to 10 years of hard labour and 10 years of imprisonment. The reason for such severe punishment probably was the letter that he wrote to Pasquier in Hongkong in 1935.

IV. Remaining in China After Losing Contact with the Siam Committee

In late September 1936 Comrade Phung Chi Kien, who was in charge of liaison work for the Overseas Headquarters of the Party, wrote me a letter and mailed some money to me, asking me to go to Hongkong.

He had already arranged for me to stay with a worker's family in Hongkong. My share of the rent would be four dollars each month. After introducing me to my host, he took me out to a restaurant, where he told me the following:

> The Siam Committee has informed me that the organization over there had become the victim of White terror, most of the grass-roots organizations of overseas

Vietnamese in the northeastern area had been destroyed and almost all the leading cadres arrested. So, it was suggested that we send you there immediately. You can leave as soon as the liaison man from Siam arrives. The man whose house you will be staying at is a very kind worker, but you should tell him that you are unemployed and are trying to find a job, because that's what we have told him.

In order to pretend to look for a job, I went out early in the morning everyday, returned at noon time, and went out again after resting two or three hours. I would come back sometimes as late as nine or ten o'clock in the evening. I would see Phung Chi Kien once every several days and he would tell me that there had been no message. More than a month went by when one day Phung said that it was not convenient to be waiting here such a long time and that I could return to Nanjing first. I said if I had to wait for news from Siam, I might as well go to Guangzhou, because that would save time on the way. Phung Chi Kien explained, "We have recently transferred to Guangzhou a few people from Cap's group in Nanjing. I don't know whether they have settled down or not. If you go to Guangzhou, it will add to their difficulties. Now that Van is still in Nanjing, You can help him if you join him there."

Consequently I returned to Nanjing.

It happened that the Transportation Corps was enrolling recruits after my arrival. With Le Thiet Hung's help, I was enrolled to learn driving there. I went with the Corps to Wuhu, Anhui Province, for training. About two months later I received a cable from Mr. Ho Hoc Lam asking me to return to Nanjing. I thought maybe news had come from Hongkong. But I returned to Nanjing only to find out that Mr. Ho had got me a job as a secretary at the General Staff Headquarters. The work involved mostly keeping records. At first I was given the rank of warrant officer. A few months later, however, I was promoted to second lieutenant with a monthly salary of a little

more than 30 yuan. So I could support myself now.

After Japan occupied northeast China and set up the puppet regime of Manchukuo in 1931, the anti-Japanese movement started to gain momentum day by day. Particularly in late 1935, the Red Army completed its Long March and the Chinese Communist Party put forward its proposal to "stop the civil war and unite to resist Japan", which received warm support from the masses. In Shanghai, Shen Junru, Zou Taofen, Sha Qianli, Wang Zaoshi, Zhang Naiqi, Li Gongpu and Shi Liang openly advocated uniting with the Chinese Communist Party to resist Japan. They were arrested by the Chiang Kai-shek clique and brought to trial in Suzhou and charged with being pro-Communist. That was known as the case of the "Seven Patriots". One of the seven said at a trial, "The Communists eat and so do we. Why is it that the Communists know it is imperative to resist Japan and we don't?" Profound schisms occurred within the Chiang Kai-shek clique. In December 1936 Generals Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek in Xi'an and demanded that he stop the civil war and unite with the Communists to fight Japan. It was not until Chiang had promised that he would do so before he was set free.

However, Nanjing remained in darkness. No progressive book or magazine could find its way into the city. We witnessed thousands upon thousands of college and middle school students demonstrating in the streets but no newspapers in Nanjing dared even mention a word about it. Occasionally I could get hold of a copy of the Journal *World Affairs* and a few progressive newspapers published in Shanghai, which enabled me to know what was going on internationally as well as to keep abreast of ideological and cultural developments in China.

In July 1937 under the pretext that one of their soldiers was missing, Japanese troops attacked Lugouqiao (Marco Polo Bridge) and were threatening to take Beiping. Under enormous popular pressure, Chiang Kai-shek had to declare war against Japan. In August the same year, when the Japanese troops

occupied Shanghai and destroyed the battery in Jiangyin, Chiang Kai-shek decided to abandon Nanjing. The government and various organizations subordinate to it were all moved to Chongqing, with the Headquarters of the General Staff (whose name at that time was changed to "the Military Headquarters") being moved to Wuhan. As a secretary at the Military Headquarters, I moved to Wuhan too.

In Wuhan the paperwork at the Headquarters increased dramatically. I used a brush to write on writing paper made of bamboo and a pencil to write on carbon paper, and cut stencils. There were piles of documents to be copied and sometimes I worked extra hours in the evening. But what gave me great interest was that Wuhan had become the centre of culture of China after the fall of Shanghai. Many famous figures and progressives of the cultural circle gathered there. Now that the Kuomintang and Communist Party were in co-operation, the former had to allow the open publication of Communist and progressive newspapers. Everyday after lunch I would go to a tea-house to buy a copy of the *Xin Hua* (*New China*) *Daily*, organ of the Chinese Communist Party, and read it from the beginning to the end over a cup of tea. In the evening I would go to the Xin Hua Bookstore or the Life Bookstore to look for books to read. I would buy a copy which I deemed necessary. During this period of time I read quite a lot of books, gaining a better understanding of the international situation and China's War of Resistance Against Japan. It also increased my understanding of political economics, philosophy and sociology as well as of Marxism-Leninism.

In June 1938 Phung Chi Kien came to Wuhan, telling me that we had lost all contact with the Siamese Party. He said that he would go and see Comrade Ye Jianying about Tran Bao and would send Van and myself to go to Yan'an to study.

Tran Bao, who used the pseudonym of Choat when in Siam, was the interpreter for the comrades on the Siam Committee. In 1934 he was assigned to report work to the Overseas Headquarters of the Party. He not only failed to fulfil the task

but embezzled funds of the Party. In 1937 when all the cadres working in Siam were arrested, he was fooling around in Bangkok. When the Siam Committee assigned him to take 40 overseas Chinese youths to China to join the New Fourth Army, he deserted them after arriving in Hongkong. As the youths, who waited in Hongkong for a long time, had spent all their money, they had to go to Guangzhou. Some of them had no alternative but to join Yu Hanmou's Army. Instead of being allowed to take part in the war of resistance, they received fascist treatment. In 1938 when Tran Bao came to Hankou and met Comrade Ye Jianying, he boasted that he was an overseas Chinese returning from Siam to take part in the war of resistance. Comrade Ye warmly received him and gave him his card. Tran would flaunt this card to show others how important he was.

Phung Chi Kien told Comrade Ye Jianying about Tran Bao's background and what Tran had done and requested Comrade Ye to keep an eye on him. Then he asked him for help to send Van and myself to Yan'an to study.

Comrade Ye Jianying expressed that he was ready to help but said that Comrade Chen Jiakang would discuss the matter in detail with us.

After several discussions with Comrade Chen Jiakang, I resigned my post as secretary in the Military Headquarters. Van and I moved to the Office of the Eighth Route Army in Dashi Company and waited there for more than two weeks before the comrades in the office informed us that we could not make the trip owing to transport difficulties. We had to leave the office, Van going back to stay with Le Thiet Hung in the Transportation Corps and I going to Changsha, capital of Hunan Province, to stay with Mr. Ho Hoc Lam.

When Chiang Kai-shek's General Staff Headquarters left Nanjing, Ho Hoc Lam was appointed director of the stay-behind-office. Seeing through their contemptible tricks, Mr. Ho moved to Wuhu, Anhui Province, with his family and Van before Japanese troops occupied Nanjing. After having ar-

ranged for Van to stay with Le Thiet Hung, he went to Changsha to be staff officer of the Military Control Area under the command of Zhang Zhizhong, who was also Governor of the province.

Changsha was in peace, bustling with activity. From time to time, progressives would go there to make speeches on current affairs and on the War of Resistance Against Japan. I would attend their meetings when they were held in the evenings, because I had to do shopping and prepare meals for Mr. Ho in the daytime.

News came out of the blue that Guangzhou had fallen to the enemy and then Jiujiang and Wuhan in succession. The situation in Changsha became very tense. Chaos reigned in the streets. Most shops were closed and government offices were preparing to evacuate.

On the morning of November 12, 1938, when the two large boats (Mr. Ho, Tran Bao and I were on board), requisitioned by the Military Control Headquarters to evacuate personnel, left the dock, a conflagration swept across the city of Changsha. Japanese planes kept circling in the sky, which was filled with smoke.

When the boats reached Xiangtan, we discovered that the people there were also fleeing helter-skelter like those in Changsha, and no porter was available on the dock. I stayed on the dock to look after Mr. Ho who was ill while Tran Bao went to the city to look for a sedan-chair, which took him a long time, to carry Mr. Ho and a few pieces of our luggage.

It took us ten days of walking to get to Xinhua County. We learned from the newspapers that Changsha had not fallen to Japanese troops and that it was the garrison commander and the chief of the Police Bureau on the Changsha Defence Committee who had given the order to set the city afire, on hearing the rumour spread by Chinese traitors that Yueyang (about 100 km away from Changsha) had fallen into enemy hands. In the conflagration, there were 50,000 casualties and inestimable damage had been done to the property of the people and the state. Later, the Chinese traitors who had given

the order to set the city on fire were executed.

We continued walking for another ten days before we arrived at Yuanling in western Hunan leading to the Guiyang Highway. There we met a unit of the Transportation Corps in which Le Thiet Hung was a deputy battalion commander. Many people in that unit knew Ho Hoc Lam, and they gave us several short rides on their trucks, which put us closer to the remote Great Rear Area.

We stayed in Huangping County in Guizhou Province for quite some time. Quiet and serene, it was an ideal place for Mr. Ho to recuperate. During that time we continued to keep in close contact with some cadres in the battalion led by Le Thiet Hung. Two of the platoon leaders with more progressive ideas often read political books and would come to us for explanations whenever they came across words they could not understand. They were actually reading books on Marxism-Leninism. It happened that when Chiang Kai-shek pledged to co-operate with the Communists and declared war against Japan, some of the left-wing publishing houses began to use such new expressions as not to offend the Kuomintang, in order to facilitate publication of books with political content. For example, they used "Ilyich" or "Ulyyanov" instead of "Lenin" and "Karl" instead of "Marx", and used Chinese transliterations of words such as "bourgeoisie" and "proletariat". The platoon leaders were unfamiliar with these terms because they had only received, at most, a junior high school education in the Chiang Kai-shek ruled areas.

We knew another platoon leader with a lower educational level. He fell in love with a progressive teacher in the countryside who asked him to buy some political books every time they met. He thought to himself: "If I don't understand the books I buy for her, what shall I say when she asks me questions about what is in these books?" So, he had to read the books carefully first and asked us to explain the things he could not understand. This became a good opportunity for us to help him improve his theoretical knowledge and his understanding of

the revolution.

We had already won them over to our Party within a period of only a few months. One of them, by the name of Xi Khuan, left no room for doubt in our minds that he desired very strongly to go to Yan'an. Later when we met President Ho, we told him about the man's background. President Ho referred him to the Office of the Eighth Route Army in Guiyang. After China was liberated, Comrade Xi Khuan had another chance to get in touch with us, and it was then that he found out that we were members of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

After Mr. Ho Hoc Lam recovered from his illness, I accompanied him to Guiyang, capital of Guizhou, when there was a truck going there. With the help of overseas Vietnamese from Yunnan, we were able to stay at Vu Hong Khanh's place. As a member of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party, Vu had been carrying out different sorts of activities in Yunnan Province. Being accused of murder and extortion, he had been expelled by the provincial authorities, come with his family and several young Vietnamese to Guiyang and settled down here.

Vu Hong Khanh had heard of Mr. Ho Hoc Lam for a long time. Now meeting Mr. Ho in person, he was very much impressed by Mr. Ho' honesty, modesty and moral integrity. I accompanied Mr. Ho as his nephew, and Vu was also convinced that I was a revolutionary and an *Étatiste*. We discussed problems in an atmosphere of warmth and congeality, and both Vu and I promised to go to Kunming and see what we could do among the overseas Vietnamese in Yunnan. Although we stayed at Vu's house for barely a month, we left an excellent impression on Vu's family and the Vietnamese youths who had come with him from Kunming.

At the beginning of 1939, as there was a truck going to Kunming, I proposed to Mr. Ho that I leave first, to which he agreed. After my arrival in Kunming I carried on revolutionary activities with the comrades there.

The Second Period
FROM KUNMING TO PAC BO

(1939-1942)

This period begins from my arrival in Kunming in early 1939 and ends when I left China for Pac Bo in late 1942. My activities during this period are to be described in the following chronological sequence:

I. The situation in Kunming and my work there.
II. The shift of focus to Guangxi.
III. Activities in Longzhou.
IV. Activities in Jingxi.
V. My arrest in Pingmeng.
VI. Struggle in Liuzhou.
VII. Preparations to return home.

The first four sections were included in the book *Dau Nguon* published by the Hanoi Literary Publishing House in 1975. I have kept the original text, i.e., the version in *Dau Nguon*, of those sections, except that I have added section titles for the sake of consistency.

I. The Situation in Kunming and My Work There

In early 1939 about a month after the Spring Festival, I bade farewell to Mr. Ho Hoc Lam and left Guiyang for Kunming. After my arrival my comrades arranged for me to stay with Tong Minh Phuong's family, a revolutionary family whose members had worked with the Party ever since 1936. First I learned tailoring for some time, before I found work in

a small tailor's shop and at the same time started to do political work among the community of young overseas Vietnamese tailors. Later I worked at the STAI motor repair shop, where I began to work for labour movement. Before a few months had elapsed, however, the factory management found out about my revolutionary activities and sacked me. From then on, I moved between Tong Minh Phuong's and Do Dang Trinh's places. Then Phung Chi Kien came to Kunming to organize an overseas department and set up an underground printing shop to print and distribute leaflets. I often lived at the shop.

I think it necessary to describe briefly the conditions under which our comrades worked in Kunming.

Kunming was the capital of Yunnan Province situated in southwest China. In accordance with the unequal treaty concluded between the Qing Government and the French imperialists in 1885, the French Railway Corporation built a railway running from Hanoi through Lao Cai and Ha Khau to Kunming. All the Vietnamese working on the train or in the railway stations were employed and supervised by the Corporation, and the Chinese authorities had no right whatsoever to interfere.

France had in Kunming a consulate, a special radio station, a special hospital as well as a STAI motor repair shop. The Vietnamese residing in cities and towns along the railway line totalled more than 2,000. They ran barbershops, tailorshops and other small businesses. All of them were dependents of Vietnamese employees of the French Railway Corporation and were under the jurisdiction of the French Consul in accordance with the regulations of extraterritoriality.

In 1929, when Nguyen The Nghiep lost to Nguyen Thai Hoc in the contest for leadership of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party in Viet Nam, French secret agents sent him to Yunnan Province. There with the assistance of Nguyen Kim Ngu, an overseas Vietnamese who was an agent for the Chinese Kuomintang, and another person who was head of the train crew and a lackey of the French, he carried out espionage activities

among the overseas Vietnamese employees. In 1930 when the An Bai Uprising ended up in failure, Vu Hong Khanh fled from Viet Nam to Yunnan Province and joined Nguyen The Nghiep's clique. With the acquiescence of the French authorities and the help of the Chinese authorities, Vu and Nguyen formed the Vietnamese Nationalist Party which, with a number of hooligans serving as its backbone, cheated and bullied the people. The Party set up branches in different parts of Yunnan. In Kunming it had a guildhall of overseas Vietnamese which was actually a den for its main figures. Its chieftains, including Nguyen The Nghiep and Vu Hong Khanh, lived in hotels and led dissolute lives. They lived on contributions which they forced overseas Vietnamese to give and on money they extorted in more direct ways from them. One overseas Vietnamese who told others all the details of what he had learned about them was summoned to the guildhall where he was made to stand and had his ears boxed and was warned not to speak ill of his "leaders" any more.

During this period when they could openly conduct their activities, they scrambled for power and fortune, and contradictions among them were very acute. Having been openly exposed and censured by Nguyen Kim Ngu, Nguyen The Nghiep and Vu Hong Khanh sent their men to assassinate Nguyen Kim Ngu. When the plot failed, both Nguyen and Vu were arrested. Nguyen The Nghiep wrote a letter to the French Consul in Kunming, asking for intervention, and in 1933 the Yunnan authorities had them both expelled to Guangxi.

As a result, they were completely discredited, and their organizations everywhere disintegrated. Some of their backers with revolutionary ideas left them to find some other way out. For example, Tran Quoc Tuan (Dong A), Do Dang Trinh, Le Quoc Tru (Black Tru) and Tu Chi Kien went to Nanjing where they made contact with and received help from our Party. And eventually they came to accept its line.

At the end of 1935, Vu Anh, Dong A and Do Dang Trinh received orders to leave Nanjing and return to Kunming to expand Party organizations and set up a Yunnan-Guizhou

Branch.

In 1936 Vu Hong Khanh secretly came back to Kunming, but he was already much detested by the people. There were only a dozen reactionaries who were willing to follow him and to sabotage the revolution. Employing a correct strategy, comrades of the Yunnan-Guizhou Branch carried out activities under the banner of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party. Together with Comrade Vu Anh, they formed a Left-wing group within the Vietnamese Nationalist Party organization and waged a face-to-face struggle against Vu Hong Khanh. After a period of concerted effort, the Left-wing group was able to gain the upper hand. The newly formed Labour Fraternity Society and Youth Education Society were under the complete control of Comrade Dong A. Dong A proposed to change the name of the broadsheet *Thiet Huyet* (*Iron Blood*) to *Dai Chung* (*The Masses*). But his proposal was turned down by Vu Hong Khanh, who then had to edit, print and distribute *Thiet Huyet* all by himself. All the copies he sent out were either torn to shreds or returned with criticisms. *Thiet Huyet* thus came to its end. Our comrades published *Dai Chung* to expound our Party's policies to the people. Not long after he had arrived this time in Kunming, Vu Hong Khanh was prosecuted by the masses and was expelled to Guiyang once more by the Chinese authorities. Instead of ceasing his activities, he went on to oppose the revolution along with some of his followers who remained in Kunming, maintaining either overt or covert contact with him.

In 1939, shortly after my arrival in Kunming, Vu Hong Khanh went there too, this time under the protection of Nghiem Ke To, a secret agent working for the Chongqing authorities. He got permission from the Chinese authorities to carry out activities in Kunming. Whenever he called a meeting we would as usual send our comrades together with other people to attend and expose his true colours. Consequently, Vu Hong Khanh's clique had to think twice before calling public meetings. To intimidate people, one of his righthand men,

taking advantage of his being an army officer of the Chinese Kuomintang, brazenly came to Tong Minh Phuong's home and pulled out his gun, saying that it was a warning to all those who should dare to do things at the bidding of "those Communists". On one occasion, Vu Hong Khanh and his cohorts called a very secret meeting to which representatives of the Chinese Kuomintang were invited. On learning this, we sent some of our people to attend the meeting. No sooner had the meeting begun their guards at the entrance shouted, "Trinh Dong Hai's (Vu Anh's) men have come!" Uproar and confusion ensued immediately, forcing Vu Hong Khanh's people to call off the meeting. Le Tung Son, whom we have arranged to sit next to the Chinese Kuomintang representatives, told them the whole story, thereby discrediting Vu Hong Khanh's people once again in the face of the Kuomintang.

Nevertheless, some time later, Vu Hong Khanh's people were able to publicize their "Declaration on the Current Situation" through the newspapers and wire services, in which they advocated co-operation with France. Obviously, they did this under instructions by the Chinese Kuomintang, although it was also a logical product of their obstinate capitulationist, counter-revolutionary line. Through the "Association of Vietnamese in Support of China's Resistance" (established in 1937), we promptly made a statement exposing the fallacy behind this declaration. Our statement was written in Chinese and was distributed to news agencies around the world, including Chiang Kai-shek's government, Chinese newspapers, people's organizations and Vietnamese residing in Yunnan. Thus, the people were able to see more clearly the counter-revolutionary features of Vu Hong Khanh's people.

In addition to Vu Hong Khanh's and Nghiem Ke To's cliques, there was a small Trotskyite group composed of three or four people. The head of the group was a man who was well-educated, skilled at painting and sculpture, and under the strong influence of Ta Thu Thau. The group's ideas sounded very revolutionary and deceived some people. They urged Vietnamese in China to stage demonstrations against France

and to demand tax reductions from the Chinese authorities. Wherever they carried out their activities we dealt them merciless blows, thus to thwart their schemes and isolate them from the masses.

Towards the end of 1939, Comrade Phung Chi Kien returned to Kunming from Shantou to set up an overseas Party branch to provide leadership for different fields of work in China. (In 1938 he was arrested in Hongkong and expelled. He then went to Shantou to take part in guerrilla training.) The overseas branch consisted of three members: Phung Chi Kien, Vu Anh and myself (by the alias of Ly Quang Hoa). It published a broadsheet *Truyen Tin* (*Correspondence*), which was renamed *Dong Thanh* (*Common Voice*). It advocated unity against France and support for China's resistance to Japan and, at the same time, tried to expose the deceptive propaganda by Vu Hong Khanh, Nghiem Ke To and the Trotskyite clique.

In early 1940 President Ho, under the alias of Ho Quang and in the capacity of a lieutenant-instructor of the Eighth Route Army, came to Kunming. He lived in the Xinhua Bookstore, but often went to Comrade Phung Chi Kien's place to give guidance for the work of the overseas branch.

Politically, President Ho held that the Yunnan-Guizhou Branch had been successful in its work because it had won over the masses and weeded out the influence of Nguyen The Nghiep, Vu Hong Khanh and company. At the same time he criticized shortcomings in its work and made some suggestions for improvement. For example, he pointed out that the railway workers' strike led by the branch sometime before had merely opposed the French authorities for their refusal to send arms to China and had failed to take advantage of this opportunity to publicize the importance of resisting Japan and increase the people's understanding of the revolution. He proposed to distribute leaflets along the Ha Khau-Kunming Railway in the name of the Association of Vietnamese in Support of China's Resistance, calling on overseas Vietnamese to fight the French and to support China's resistance to Japan.

On propaganda work, he proposed changing the name of the broadsheet *Dong Thanh* to *D.T.* He explained that the initials D. and T. could be taken to mean "in unison", "one heart", "struggle" and "resistance to France". He examined and edited most of the articles published in this broadsheet, improving their quality and making the language concise and easily understandable. Consequently the broadsheet became very popular among the masses.

Prior to this, we had established contacts with two Chinese Communists in Yunnan, Comrades Chen Fang and Ma Ziqing, and these ties were strengthened with the help of President Ho.

To know more about how things stood with Vietnamese residing in Yunnan, President Ho went with Comrade Phung Chi Kien to places along the railway line where there was a large number of Vietnamese, places such as Mengzi, Yiliang, Kaiyuan, and Zhicun. According to Phung Chi Kien, when they arrived at Zhicun, the local people were holding a funeral service for those Bisezhai villagers who had been killed in Japanese airplane bombings. Both Phung and Ho took part in the funeral. Phung read aloud "Mourning for Our Deceased Compatriots of Bisezhai Village", a poem that had been published in *D.T.* The participants were deeply moved.

In accordance with President Ho's instruction on the need to set up organizations in the border regions, the overseas branch dispatched Loc to Ha Khau to establish ties with the local people and also to make contact with comrades in Viet Nam through secret channels.

In early May 1940 Bui Duc Minh (formerly a Party member of the Yunnan-Guizhou Branch who had earlier been transferred back to Viet Nam) accompanied Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap to Kunming. He had also brought with him a letter of introduction from the Central Committee, which said that, because of the repression being carried out by the enemy back home, Pham and Vo were specially sent abroad and asked that arrangements be made for them to study. The overseas branch arranged a secret meeting between them and

President Ho, who decided to send them to study at the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yan'an. Before their departure we, as directed by President Ho, organized a seminar on the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*. Each person in the seminar studied one historical period and then gave a report of the main points. This was followed by general discussion. Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, Phung Chi Kien and I myself often took part in this study, but Dang Van Cap and Vu Anh were present only once or twice.

On June 20, 1940 Paris fell to the Germans. President Ho assembled comrades of the overseas branch for a discussion of the current situation. It was decided to shift the focus of our work to the border regions first and then to Viet Nam.

This can be considered an important turning point of historic significance.

After this decision was made, President Ho went to Chongqing to exchange views on the situation with the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. He went there by plane, but on his return he could only get a bus ticket. Much delay occurred on the way back and it was more than a month before he returned to Kunming.

One question to be considered was which of the border regions should be selected for our operations? Formerly, after President Ho arrived in Kunming, he had dispatched comrades to the border between Yunnan and Viet Nam to see how things were there. The political situation in Yunnan at that time was unfavourable for the comrades to operate in the border region. Moreover, we had no mass following in Ha Giang and Lao Cai provinces that bordered on Yunnan. Under these circumstances, the border areas in Guangdong or Guangxi would have to be selected for operation. Shortly after President Ho had left for Chongqing, we received a letter from Mr. Ho Hoc Lam to the effect that the time was ripe for revolutionary activities: Truong Boi Cong had received help from the Chinese Kuomintang and was looking here and there for

Vietnamese revolutionaries and intended to ask Mr. Ho Hoc Lam to co-operate with him. Mr. Ho knew that Truong Boi Cong had never been a revolutionary, so he wrote that letter suggesting that we rush to Guangxi to persuade him not to do anything harmful to the revolution. We reported all this to President Ho after he returned to Kunming. He promptly decided to dispatch Phung Chi Kien, Vu Anh and me to Guiyang to see Ho Hoc Lam, while sending a telegram to Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap, who were waiting in the Office of the Eighth Route Army in Guiyang to be sent to Yan'an to study, and Cao Hong Lanh, who would accompany them there, asking them all to wait for us so that we could all go to Guangxi together.

II. The Shift of Focus to Guangxi

Truong Boi Cong was a Vietnamese with the rank of major general in the Chinese Kuomintang army. He had been trying to avoid meeting with Vietnamese for fear of any involvement in the revolution. Now that the Chinese Kuomintang had assigned him the task of organizing intelligence work and of preparing to act as a guide for the Chinese troops in the future when they entered Viet Nam, he found it necessary to make contact with other Vietnamese and to ask Mr. Ho Hoc Lam to co-operate with him.

Through Mr. Ho Hoc Lam, we met with Truong Boi Cong at his workplace at Daqiao, which was several kilometres from the city proper of Liuzhou. He discovered that we were all well-educated, brilliant young men of high political calibre as well as quite familiar with the situation at home. He felt that we were vastly different from those Vietnamese and overseas Chinese he had recruited.

We discussed with him on the current situation, developments of the revolution, the activities of Vietnamese both at home and abroad, and so forth. At the same time, we accomplished some specific tasks, such as compiling documents dealing with the situation in Viet Nam and a collection of revolu-

tionary poems and songs, and worked among Vietnamese and overseas Chinese who were with him. He did some foolish things, such as asking us to draft a budget listing our living expenses, trying to mobilize us to take part in military training, and demanding that we stand up and salute him when he came into the room. We rejected all these ridiculous demands of his. Through our contacts and talks with him, we came to see that he was a warlord-type of person and a vassal of the Chinese Kuomintang. He wanted only to use us for collecting intelligence so that he would be able to boast to the Kuomintang that he had very capable people working under him, in an attempt to win the Kuomintang's trust in him.

The most foolish thing he did was to include all our names in a list of his staff, which he was to send to Zhang Fakui. We were strongly against it, insisting that he take out our names from the list and that he tell Zhang that we were revolutionaries and not his subordinates. By doing so, of course, he would lose his foothold in the Kuomintang. But we were positive on this issue. (More details about Truong Boi Cong will be given later.)

One day President Ho came here from Kunming. We met with him secretly and reported the above to him. After analysing the situation, he maintained that we should leave Truong Boi Cong and ask Mr. Ho Hoc Lam to leave Liuzhou together with us for Guilin, which we made our new base of operations.

When we arrived in Guilin around October 1940, President Ho was already there. We made arrangements for Mr. Ho Hoc Lam to be hospitalized at the Guilin Hospital. We often went to the Office of the Eighth Route Army where we would meet with President Ho in secret to report to him and to ask for instructions on problems concerning our activities.

The first question was in what organization's name we should carry out our activities. President Ho was in favour of the name of the Vietnamese Independence League (The Viet Minh for short) and he suggested that we ask Mr. Ho Hoc Lam to head the League. This view was based on the fact that we and Mr. Ho had established the Viet Minh together, that the

organization had been registered with the Chinese authorities in Nanjing and that Mr. Ho's wholehearted support would be of great help to our cause as he was known to be a non-Communist.

Mr. Ho readily consented to be head of the Viet Minh. He introduced us to his old schoolmate Lin Wei, who was President of the Guilin School attached to the Central Military Academy as well as Deputy Director of Chiang Kai-shek's Southwest Field Headquarters. Lin Wei, in turn, introduced us to Li Jishen, Director of the Field Headquarters.

Lam Ba Kiet (Pham Van Dong), Duong Hoai Nam (Vo Nguyen Giap), Trinh Dong Hai (Vu Anh), Phung Chi Kien, Cao Hong Lanh and I (by the alias of Ly Quang Hoa) together met with Li Jishen that day. As planned by President Ho, we presented to him a copy of the brief history of the Viet Minh in Chinese, informing him that we had already established in China an overseas office of the Viet Minh with Ho Hoc Lam as director and Lam Ba Kiet deputy director.

After giving him the synopsis, we explained that there were two major political organizations in Viet Nam: the Communist Party and the Viet Minh. The main force of the Communist Party was the workers. The Party was receiving international support from the Comintern. The main force of the Viet Minh was to be found in the upper strata of society and in the rural areas. We had always co-operated with the Communist Party because it was a very powerful anti-Japanese force. However, we badly needed international support and hoped that he would give us full support.

Li Jishen spoke to us amiably. He said that in accordance with the Testament of the late Premier Sun Yat-sen they were obliged to give help to small and weak nations, but that, as this was not something that could be done by any individual, it was up to the Central Executive Committee of his Party to decide. He made a point of reminding us that while we were co-operating with the Communist Party, we had to see to it that leadership do not slip into its hands.

Through this meeting with Li Jishen, the Viet Minh actually received recognition and its office was tacitly accepted

as a legitimate organ.

A few days later President Ho reminded us that in carrying out revolutionary activities we should give others to think that we were short of funds. He suggested that we invite Li Jishen's secretary to dinner so that he would be impressed and help us to get more assistance. Then we gave a banquet at Guanshengyuan Hotel with 500 yuan provided by President Ho. The overall results of this banquet were as President Ho had predicted.

During this period President Ho, through some "in-house connections", introduced Pham Van Dong to some Chinese progressive writers. They initiated the founding of a Viet Nam-China Cultural Association. On December 8, 1940, the Association was officially founded at the Le Qun Club. Its full name was "Association of Sino-Vietnamese Cultural Comrades". In their capacity as Director and Deputy Director of the Overseas Office of the Viet Minh, Ho Hoc Lam and Pham Van Dong were on its board of directors. This was reported in all the Guilin newspapers, thereby further legitimizing the Viet Minh in public.

Li Jishen was anti-Communist in the past. By now he was Director of the Southwest Field Headquarters only in name; the real power lay with Major General Yang Jirong, a secret agent and trusted follower of Chiang Kai-shek. Yang was planted here to keep a close watch of Li Jishen, a fact which Li himself was well aware of. Li believed that to show concern with and offer help to the Vietnamese Independence League, which had already been registered with the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang, would do no harm to himself but would enhance his reputation. Yang Jirong was unfriendly to us. Whenever he met with us, he would try to feel us out and often spoke to us in an admonitory manner. On one occasion he even lay in a reclining chair talking to us. He knew how we had dealt with Truong Boi Cong, so he dared not go too far. However, during our talks he would from time to time find an excuse to attack the Communist Party to see how we would react.

Yang Jirong accused us of being Communists when he

visited Mr. Ho Hoc Lam in the hospital one day. Mr. Ho rebuked him sternly, saying,

> You and several of your colleagues have not given any help to the Vietnamese revolution and yet you have personally made out of the revolution millions of yuan in fact! You cannot succeed in recruiting our young people to act as your intelligence agents. They are all committed revolutionaries. Since you cannot win them over, you want to frame them, alleging that they are Communists. Am I right? Please produce evidence to prove it. I am willing to guarantee with my life that they are not.

Henceforth, Yang Jirong tried to evade Mr. Ho, claiming that Mr. Ho was taking advantage of his seniority to twist the truth and that he wouldn't bring himself to do so in return.

I want to mention in passing that shortly after his arrival in Guilin, Nguyen Hai Than tried to sow discord between Mr. Ho and us. Mr. Ho promptly gave him a good dressing down, saying,

> You, Nguyen Hai Than, like me, have been in China for more than four decades, but have not made any contributions to our country. Now, we are old and should let the young people play their role. It is they who really have the ability to accomplish something. Now the Chinese authorities have allowed us to operate for no other purpose than making use of us. Actually we cannot accomplish anything without the efforts of our comrades back in Viet Nam. I'd advise you to concentrate on doing the best you can do and not be jealous of others.

Nguyen Hai Than was very unhappy with what Mr. Ho said. However, after weighing the pros and cons he felt it was better to join the Viet Minh. Therefore, he still claimed to be a member of the Viet Minh during his stay in Guilin and later in Jingxi (more details about this will be given later).

During the period in Guilin, thanks to direct leadership by President Ho, to Mr. Ho's good offices and correct attitude and to the enthusiastic support of Chinese progressives, we were able to win a certain degree of support from Li Jishen and definite, legitimate status.

After we left Liuzhou for Guilin, Truong Boi Cong moved his troops to Jingxi County near Cao Bang of Viet Nam. One of his men sympathized with the revolution. He wrote us a letter telling us that many cadres had crossed over the border from Viet Nam and suggesting that we contact them at once. President Ho immediately sent Vo Nguyen Giap, Vu Anh and Cao Hong Lanh to Jingxi to make contact with them and, at the same time, to try to persuade Truong Boi Cong to send a telegram to Guilin, asking the Viet Minh Office there to send people to Jingxi to discuss the work situation. We and President Ho went to Jingxi as soon as the telegram of invitation from Truong Boi Cong reached us. We made this trip in a stately manner. Li Jishen gave us a present of 800 yuan for travelling expenses and the "South China Working Corps" travel permits with a large red seal bearing two Chinese characters "Zhong Zheng", another name of Chiang Kai-shek. When we arrived at Liuzhou, we met Dang Van Cap, Nguyen Van Loc, Do Dang Trinh and Sister Hien, who had come from Kunming, and then our "mighty party" went to Nanning by long-distance bus. Two days later we hired a boat to sail to Tiandong. On the boat, in order to keep his identity secret from our fellow travellers, President Ho went about as a Chinese journalist. He would talk with us in Chinese and sometimes in French when discussing complex international matters, with Pham Van Dong acting as his interpreter. After seven days the boat arrived at Tiandong. Pham Van Dong, Nguyen Van Loc, Do Dang Trinh and Sister Hien took a long-distance bus to Jingxi, while President Ho, Phung Chi Kien, Dang Van Cap and myself stayed at Tianbao to wait for news from the border. Next day Vu Anh came by bicycle to report to President Ho that everything was ready. On the third day we all set out on foot, having our lunch at Zurong Town (where President Ho was later arrested). We continued our journey and at about 8 p.m. reached Xinxu, a small town some 10 km from Jingxi, where Vu Anh and Hoang Sam were waiting for us. We all settled down in an ordinary person's home.

President Ho had come to Xinxu to see if our comrades at Jingxi had succeeded in contacting those who had just come from Viet Nam.

During this period we and President Ho often met Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap at a place somewhere between Xinxu and Jingxi to hear their report. We learned from them that the comrades coming from Liuzhou had already been settled down and that those 43 comrades (including Le Quang Ba) from Cao Bang in Viet Nam had been assembled by Truong Boi Cong to form a training corps under Truong Trung Phung. As these comrades couldn't stand Truong Boi Cong's fascist way of training and treatment, they were waiting for an opportune moment to leave him.

One day after supper, when President Ho, Phung Chi Kien, Dang Van Cap and myself were taking a walk, we ran into Le Quang Ba and Hoang Sam who had left Jingxi in a hurry to meet us. They told us that things were so bad that our comrades could no longer stay with Truong Boi Cong. Therefore, they planned to escape to the border area the following day and they themselves would go to Bameng before making a detour to meet with the other comrades at Gema. President Ho let them go after asking them a few casual questions. After they left, we exchanged opinions while continuing our walk. President Ho thought that their plan was ill-advised and instructed me and Dang Van Cap to hurry to Bameng to call them back, saying that when we had a full understanding of the situation, we would be able to take appropriate measures. We set off immediately, reached Bameng at about 10 p.m. and were back to Xinxu at midnight. President Ho said to Le Quang Ba that at present the Chinese Kuomintang and Truong Boi Cong were in dire need of Vietnamese and would not arrest or harm the comrades. Therefore, they could return to Jingxi without any worry and arrange for the comrades to leave openly, telling Truong that they were going back to Viet Nam to mobilize the people. After departure, they could write a letter to Zhang Fakui, criticizing Truong Boi Cong and ex-

plaining why they were returning home. In doing so, they could not be charged of deserting, and Truong Boi Cong would be less able to manipulate the revolution to his own advantage.

During the anti-Japanese war, guerrillas were most active in Jingxi, Pingmeng and neighbouring places in Guangxi Province. Some of our comrades like Le Quang Ba and Hoang Sam joined Chinese guerrilla forces and, at the same time, expanded the revolutionary forces in Cao Bang Province of Viet Nam near the Chinese border. Later, because of repression by the French authorities in Viet Nam, they had to lead some cadres across the border and to seek temporary shelter at Truong Boi Cong's place. Then came the unexpected news that the Chinese authorities had issued an order for their arrest, so, to be on the safe side, they had considered leaving the place secretly. Far from being a well-thought-out approach, this was stopped in time by President Ho.

After hearing President Ho's views, Hoang Sam stayed with us at Xinxu and Le Quang Ba returned to Jingxi to make arrangements for the comrades there to go to Gema openly and afterwords to break up and lie low in the adjacent area. When they were ready to leave, Truong Trung Phung was reluctant to let them go, and the comrades agreed to meet him again some day.

After the 43 comrades left Jingxi without a hitch, President Ho asked me to write in their name a letter in Chinese to Zhang Fakui. When I showed him the draft letter, he made some changes. I found there were grammatical mistakes in the changes, though the meaning had not been altered. When I brought this up with him, he said that I only knew the mechanics of writing a letter and never took a political point of view in the matter. How could Vietnamese living in China's minority nationality areas write a letter in Chinese without making any grammatical mistakes? The letter had to contain some grammatical mistakes in order for others to believe that it was really written by Vietnamese. But for those mistakes, the letter couldn't be considered excellent. It was a trifle matter, but I learned a profound lesson from it, which gave me an

understanding of how to do practical and mass work.

From then on, Hoang Sam and myself often went to Bameng to do work among the masses. The people there sympathized with the guerrillas, the position of the Chinese Communist Party, and the Vietnamese revolution. It was here President Ho was to find a guide when he left Viet Nam at the end of 1942. Later the guide was arrested along with him and died in prison in Liuzhou.

At about the end of 1940 or the beginning of 1941, Comrade Hoang Van Thu came from Viet Nam accompanied by Bui Duc Minh. He came to Xinxu to see President Ho and to report on the situation at home and the preparations made for the Eighth Plenary Session of the Central Committee.

Soon after that, the operational base on the Vietnamese side of the border was ready for use. President Ho planned to return to Viet Nam with Phung Chi Kien, Dang Van Cap and Hoang Sam, and I was to leave for Longzhou to do liaison work and set up grass-roots mass organizations there as directed by President Ho.

III. Activities in Longzhou

On my way to Longzhou I once again passed through Jingxi, but I did not stop to visit the comrades there. I travelled with a farmer who was going to Longzhou to buy salt. After two days we arrived in the town of Shuolong which was separated from the Vietnamese province of Cao Bang by a stream. There were two roads leading to Longzhou. One crossed the border into Cao Bang Province. The distance was only 4 km and the road was level. Taking the other road, we would have to walk 12 km and climb 19 hills before finding a place to spend the night. The 19 hills were known as the "19 mounds" among the Chinese. When we approached a junction of three roads, the farmer told me that it was nearer if we went across the border on the Vietnamese side. However, since I was

a Vietnamese and dared not risk taking this road, I had to tell him a lie, saying that I was a member of an anti-Japanese propaganda team and that if I were arrested by the French troops while crossing the border, everything would "spill out". So I requested him to take the road with the "19 mounds". He readily agreed to this. After a while we ran into a border patrol who suspected that we had crude opium or weapons on us and were taking this route to avoid the French. He made a body search but found no contraband. He did find, however, the Viet Minh identification on me, which stated that I was being sent to work in Longzhou. He had a general idea that the Viet Minh was an anti-Japanese organization, so he let us pass. However, when he returned to the sentry post and reported the incident to his superior, the latter, a major, who was in constant contact with the French troops along the border of Cao Bang Province and who had previously arrested some Vietnamese whom he had handed over to the French for rewards, immediately phoned the sentry at the exit of the "19 mounds" to stop and arrest us.

Having gone over the "19 mounds" and down onto a flat road, I saw before us a sentry station. I was relieved to find out from the farmer that it was a Chinese frontier sentry station. But as we approached the station, many soldiers came out, carrying guns with bayonets, and it seemed that they were about to block the road and make arrests. Just as I had expected, as soon as we reached the entrance, we heard a shout, "Halt!" There and then the soldiers, aiming their guns at us, surrounded us. They searched us and found still only the Viet Minh identification papers and a copy of China's *Guangxi Daily*. The chief of the post had us brought into the station to wait for the commissary (the commander in charge of negotiating with the French side) to review the case. I told them that the farmer had come along only to buy salt and had had nothing to do with me before and asked them to let him go while I waited there for the commissary. They let the farmer go and I walked into the station building.

Inside, the commander interrogated me. I explained to

him what the Viet Minh was and showed him the article in the *Guangxi Daily* on the establishment in Guilin of the Association of Sino-Vietnamese Cultural Comrades, adding that if he did not believe this, he could send a telegram to the Generalissimo Chiang's Field Headquarters in Guilin to inquire about this, or to the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang in Chongqing with which the Vietnamese Independence League had already been registered in early 1936. Hearing this, he politely invited me to have dinner with him and arranged for me to stay there for the night. The commissary came back from Shuolong after 9 p.m. that evening and I repeated to him what I had told the chief that afternoon. I figured that somehow they would bring me to Longzhou, the seat of the organ at the next higher level, so I took the initiative and suggested that they dispatch a few soldiers to escort me to Longzhou the following morning. He promptly gave his approval.

After breakfast the next morning, I left with two frontier guards. On the way I was on the watch. That night we stopped over at an inn. Though we shared the same room, each had his own bed. They did not seem to treat me like a prisoner. Therefore, I bought them some refreshments and chatted with them when we took rest-stops along the way to Longzhou. We arrived at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon the next day. I suggested that we have our supper and a short rest before going to the office. Then I led them to a restaurant near the place I had arranged to meet the contact persons. After they were seated, I slipped out to the street. Within ten paces I saw Bui Ngoc Thanh and Ho Duc Thanh standing in a doorway. After exchanging greetings, Ho Duc Thanh said I could go safely to the office right away because they had already established ties with the Headquarters of the 31st Corps.

After the two soldiers and I ate our supper quickly, we went with Ho Duc Thanh to see the Inspector of the Longzhou Prefecture. We were there after office hours and the Inspector could not get through to the Headquarters. He arranged for me to spend the night at the office and had me accompanied to the

Headquarters the next morning. At the Headquarters I first met Chief of Staff Gan Weiyong and then Corps Commander Wei Yunsong. I told Wei about the Viet Minh, but he did not appear very interested. What he was concerned about was Viet Minh's attitude towards the National Rehabilitation Army. I explained that organizationally we did not recognize the National Rehabilitation Army of Viet Nam because it had been formed by the Japanese, but we were willing to co-operate with any individual so long as he was sincere in resisting the Japanese. Wei expressed satisfaction with my explanations. He invited me to have tea with him and told me that in the future I could consult freely with Chief of Staff Gan on any matter I needed their help. Thus, with the help of the Headquarters of the 31st Corps, we acquired legitimate status in Longzhou, which made work there much easier.

At the time there was a unit of the National Rehabilitation Army of Viet Nam in Longzhou. It had fled to China after coming under attack by French troops (the Japanese troops had ignored them) and had been granted permission to stay in China by the Chinese authorities. Stationed in Shangjin County, this unit of some 500 men was under the command of Hoang Luong and Luong Van Y, formerly a second lieutenant in the French army. Another unit, composed of about 40 men and stationed at Longzhe near the town of Binqiao, had been led from That Khe across the border by a Vietnamese and had been accepted by the Headquarters of the 31st Corps and accorded treatment as a platoon of the National Rehabilitation Army.

The first thing to do was try to find our liaison men through whom to get to know something about these units. With the help of Gan Weiyong, I made contact with them without much trouble. First, I went to Longzhe to meet that group of 40 men. I learned that three of them—Hoang Minh Thao, Nguyen Thanh Dong and Hoang Dien—had joined democratic youth organizations in 1936 and that one of them, by the name of Be Ha Kinh, whose ancestral home was in That

Khe, had been involved with the revolution also. I immediately managed to have a talk with them. I helped them understand the Party's line and asked them to tell the others that they had been duped into leaving Viet Nam to serve in the Corps Headquarters in China. Once they knew the truth, most of them went back to Viet Nam. Only Hoang Dien, Hoang Minh Thao, Nguyen Thanh Dong and five others stayed behind to study military science. Later, they went to Nanning and Liuzhou, and fought in support of the Viet Minh, regarding themselves as Viet Minh members.

It was difficult to make contact with the 500 men of the National Rehabilitation Army stationed in Shangjin County because they were a long distance away and we had no liaison men among them. One day I told Gan Weiyong that I intended to visit the soldiers of the National Rehabilitation Army stationed in Shangjin. He agreed and wrote a letter of introduction. I went with Be Ha Kinh because he was a native of That Khe and was sure to know some of the 500 soldiers.

When we arrived in Shangjin, Hoang Luong was away and we were politely received by Luong Van Y. I introduced myself as a member of the Viet Minh. I told him that I had come to visit them on the recommendation of the Corps Headquarters and briefed him on the revolutionary situation at home, which he expressed an interest in. I asked him if it was possible for me to meet the soldiers. He said that as Mr. Hoang (referring to Hoang Luong) was away he could not make the decision. However, there was Counsellor Huang, a Chinese official in charge of giving guidance to the Vietnamese, whom I could approach. With his approval, he would order the troops, who were dispersed in surrounding villages, to assemble. Thereupon I asked Luong Van Y to have someone take me to see Counsellor Huang. Having learned that the Viet Minh had been registered with the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang and had an office in Guilin and read the letter of introduction by Chief of Staff Gan, the Counsellor promptly told Luong Van Y to assemble the troops.

After a little over an hour the troops had assembled

standing outside on an enormous lawn. Luong Van Y and I were asked to meet them. This was a pleasant surprise. I had originally only thought of meeting with them and talking with a few. I never expected to meet them in such a grand manner. Luong Van Y introduced me to them and asked me to make a speech. Jumping at the chance, I spoke about the international situation and the revolutionary situation at home as well as our position in favour of uniting all revolutionary forces abroad. They were impressed by my talk. After the troops were dismissed to return to their barracks, over twenty cadres and I went to Luong Van Y's place to dine together like at a reception. It was a fine, warm evening with the moon shining in the sky. After dinner some cadres asked us to go to the soldiers' training ground to continue our talk. Only then did I realize that there were already people in the unit who resented being controlled by the Chinese Kuomintang. They hoped the Vietnamese would unite and "manage their own affairs". That evening we stayed with Luong Van Y and talked further. I promised to come back and visit Hoang Luong in future. We left early the next morning for Longzhou.

A few days later, I went to see Gan Weiyong to express my gratitude for his having introduced me to the Vietnamese National Rehabilitation Army. I also told him of our desire to establish an office of the Viet Minh in Longzhou under another name for the time being in order to start work there. I proposed using the name "Anti-Japanese Work Team of Overseas Chinese in Viet Nam" as well as making insignias for its members to wear wherever they go so as to save the Corps Headquarters the trouble of issuing passes every now and then. Gan Weiyong agreed. So, we arranged a tea party at which we announced the establishment of the Anti-Japanese Work Team of Overseas Chinese in Viet Nam and gave a briefing on the revolutionary situation in Viet Nam. Hereafter, wherever we went, we wore the insignias with the seal of the Corps Headquarters on them. Today Comrade Hoang Dien still has such an insignia with him.

Five or six days after the Spring Festival, Hoang Sam came to Longzhou to tell me that President Ho had instructed me to set up a secret department for contingency use. Through President Ho's special introduction, Hoang Sam and I met with a guerrilla commander in Longzhou to discuss the matter. This comrade, in turn, introduced us to meet a company commander by the surname of Ma whose troops were stationed in the Xiashi area near the border. So we hurried to Xiashi and met Company Commander Ma, who was probably a Party cadre. We stayed in his Company Headquarters for a few days and were impressed by his simple way of life and his kindness to his men and the local people. Despite the drizzle that lasted for several days on end, he and the village head, with their trousers rolled up, went with us from one place to another in the area. Finally we found a suitable place in a peasant house located in a gully. We could set up a secret liaison department there to keep in contact with our comrades in Viet Nam and, when necessary, to print books, newspapers and other material.

In addition to setting up this secret liaison department, we renewed contact with some reliable people in China who had earlier given help to Comrade Hoang Van Thu, namely, Old Pan of Banji and Da Tou (Big Head) of Banzhuang, and established ties with a few people in Longzhou who sympathized with the Vietnamese revolution, including Zhao Kuren, chief editor of *Longzhou Daily*. We explained to them the significance of the revolution in Viet Nam in order to win their assistance.

It can be said that our activities in Longzhou were fruitful. Later on, I returned to Pac Bo to report on the progress of our work, and Hoang Sam stayed behind to continue ideological work among comrades in the Longzhe area and to offer them advice when necessary.

IV. Activities in Jingxi

On my way back to Pac Bo, I stopped over for a few days at the quarters of our comrades in Jingxi in order to know how things stood there. Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap already had their own living quarters and no longer lived together with Truong Boi Cong and others. Together with the comrades from Kunming lived Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao, who claimed to be members of the Viet Minh. On the surface, our relations with Truong Boi Cong were not tense, nobody interfering with anybody else's business. Our comrades had established direct contact with Chen Baocang, representative of Zhang Fakui and Director of the Jingxi Command Post.

Loc took me to Pac Bo to report to President Ho on the progress of our work, after which I returned to Jingxi to carry out open activities along with Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap. I was appointed Party secretary responsible for keeping in contact with the Party Central Committee in Viet Nam and keeping it informed of developments in Jingxi.

During this period our main work in Jingxi was to prepare for the meeting to inaugurate the Vietnamese National Liberation League, which was intended to replace the so-called leading body of the Vietnamese revolution, i.e., the Vietnamese National Liberation Committee, to which Truong Boi Cong and his followers had given enormous publicity.

As early as 1940, when the Chinese Kuomintang sent Truong Boi Cong to Jingxi to set up its intelligence agency there, he was permitted to print stationery with "Vietnamese National Liberation Committee" letterhead. In fact, the latter organization was merely a front for the intelligence agency. In August of the previous year in Liuzhou we had already witnessed and learned a few things in this connection, but we ignored them. When we left Liuzhou for Guilin, Truong Boi Cong hurried to Jingxi to give a tea party, at which he announced the establishment of his committee and introduced its leaders, including himself, Nguyen Hai Than and two overseas Chinese.

Right after the reception Truong Boi Cong sent Nguyen Hai Than to Guilin for help. It happened that Vo Nguyen Giap, Vu Anh and Cao Hong Lanh had arrived in Jingxi. After discussion they decided that Vo Nguyen Giap should go along with Nguyen Hai Than so as to recruit the latter into the Viet Minh. (When the Viet Minh was formed in Nanjing in 1936 we had invited him to come from Guangdong to take an active part in various activities.) They also decided that Vu Anh and Cao Hong Lanh should stay in Jingxi to implement President Ho's directives concerning the winning over of the 40-odd people coming from Viet Nam, persuade Truong Boi Cong's subordinates to desert him and urge Truong to send a telegram to the Viet Minh office in Guilin, asking it to send a representative to Jingxi to discuss work.

All our efforts achieved the desired results: Vo Nguyen Giap accompanied Nguyen Hai Than to Guilin and succeeded in recruiting him into the Viet Minh; the 40-odd people from Viet Nam were won over; and Truong Boi Cong did what we asked him to do.

We owed our success in openly getting those people over from Guilin to Jingxi to the wise and thoughtful guidance of President Ho. The significance of the invitation telegram sent by Truong Boi Cong lay in the fact that, in order to pass himself off as a revolutionary and win the trust of the Chinese Kuomintang, he had to recognize the existence of the Viet Minh and the need to consult it on all issues.

However, we had returned to Jingxi not to discuss work with Truong Boi Cong but, instead, to create favourable conditions for revolutionary activities outside of Viet Nam and to organize revolutionary forces that had come from Viet Nam. Moreover, we had returned to wage a struggle against him, expose him, and cause the ranks of the forces under his control to leave him.

To this end, we proposed to form the Vietnamese National Liberation League, which we often referred to as the Liberation League, to supplant the Vietnamese National Liberation Committee. We argued that the liberation of Viet Nam re-

quired the participation of the Vietnamese people, both at home and abroad, and that therefore liberation would be impossible if only a few people, who divorced themselves from the masses, participated.

We proposed to convene in Jingxi the first congress of the Liberation League. The congress was to be attended by representatives from abroad as well as representatives from revolutionary organizations in Viet Nam, and at the congress the constitution of the League would be adopted and leading members elected. We would attend the congress and would ask organizations at home to send representatives to Jingxi.

The Chinese Kuomintang found no excuse to reject our proposal. In fact, its interest was not in the establishment of the Liberation League but in measuring our strength in Viet Nam. After the Kuomintang had given its approval, Truong Boi Cong had no choice but to obey.

Around April of 1941 all representatives from Viet Nam to the inaugural meeting of the Vietnamese National Liberation League had arrived.

Some of these representatives and those in Jingxi or from Longzhou were divided into different groups in terms of geological areas, for instance, representatives from such and such a province or from Trung Ky (the central part) or from Nam Ky (the southern part), others were divided in terms of mass organizations, such as youth, peasant and cultural organizations. In particular, there was a representative by the name of Ha Duc Phuong who attended the congress on behalf of Hoang Quoc Tuan, head of the Viet Minh, because the latter couldn't make the trip for health reasons. Actually, Hoang Quoc Tuan was a name we had fabricated to cope with the Chinese authorities.

Also present at the congress were five or six people from Truong Boi Cong's side. There were about 20 Viet Minh people. From the Chinese side there were representatives from the Jingxi authorities, from Zhang Fakui's Command Post, from the frontier troops, and Wu Genhua, captain of the

Sino-Vietnamese Border Region Political Work Team, and Yang Jirong who came from Guilin as the representative of Li Jishen.

The order of the inaugural meeting was very simple. At the beginning the establishment of the Liberation League was announced. Next, Ha Duc Phuong read the letter from Hoang Quoc Tuan and then Truong Boi Cong read a telegram addressed by the congress to Generalissimo Chiang. After that, Yan Zengwu, division commander of the troops stationed along the border on the Chinese side, gave a speech in which he expressed his sympathy for the Vietnamese revolution. When it was Yang Jirong's turn to speak, he said in an exhortatory tone that the Vietnamese revolution would get nowhere without relying on the strength of China and supporting Chinese troops to enter Viet Nam.

After the speeches, the congress elected the Central Executive Committee. A few people from Truong Boi Cong's group were on the Executive Committee; from the Viet Minh's side, Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap and myself were elected full members; Tran Bao was elected alternate member; and on the Committee were some other comrades who had come from Viet Nam and whose names I do not remember now. The Central Supervisory Commission included Nguyen Hai Than, Bui Ngoc Thanh and Dang Van Cap, with Nguyen Hai Than serving as Chairman.

Under the Central Executive Committee there were the following sections:

—Political Section: Truong Boi Cong, Lam Ba Kiet, Duong Hoai Nam, Ly Quang Hoa and others.

—Military Section: Le Thiet Hung, Truong Trung Phung and others.

—Foreign Affairs Section: Tran Bao and others.

—Financial Section: Cao Hong Lanh and others.

(The list might not be accurate and so remains to be confirmed.)

There were no overseas Chinese on the Central Executive Committee, the Central Supervisory Commission, or the dif-

ferent sections. This was a significant victory. In the course of making preparations for the congress, the Chinese authorities and Truong Boi Cong had done everything possible to have two overseas Chinese, Mai Cong Nghi and Duong Thanh Dan, elected. Being unable to come to a unanimous opinion on this issue, we had reported it to President Ho, who made it known in no unclear terms that a Vietnamese revolution such as ours could not be led by overseas Chinese. In the end Truong Boi Cong's clique had failed to impose their will on us in face of our strong opposition.

Zhang Fakui presented the congress a brocade banner on which were written four big Chinese characters, Ming Zhu Tian Nan, which mean, "looking up at the heaven south of China". In translating this into Vietnamese, I intentionally changed "heaven south of China" into "heaven above Viet Nam".

Li Jishen, too, presented such a banner on which was written a four-line poem:

The Chinese and Vietnamese nations,
Are as close as the lips to the teeth.
To avenge an insult and to survive,
They must rely on nothing but iron and blood.

There was a third banner presented by the Anti-Aggression League of Korea, which had been founded in Guilin by the Chinese Kuomintang. Ly Nhuoc Son, a Korean of the Truong Boi Cong type, was its head.

After the conclusion of the meeting President Ho made plans to put these gifts on display in different parts of Cao Bang Province so as to spread our influence and make it known that our revolution had received the assistance of these allies.

We joined the Liberation League with a view to attaining legal status for conducting activities abroad and winning as much as possible material and moral support from other countries. However, the Vietnamese Independence League remained a completely independent organization.

Now that the League had been formed on our terms and

we had dominated it politically and were in control of its central executive committee, it could be said to be absolutely under our control. Could it, then, be regarded as a leading body of the revolution? No. It was merely a political organization which the Chinese Kuomintang and its lackeys had set up with ulterior motives and which we had, through our struggle, turned into an organization of use to the revolution. Lacking a full understanding of this point at the beginning, we published a broadsheet called *Giai Phong* (*Liberation*) and sent several copies of it back to Viet Nam. As soon as President Ho had read the newspaper, he criticized it, pointing out that the revolution was led by the Party in Viet Nam and that the revolutionary organization which was uniting various forces among the masses was the Vietnamese Independence League, not the Liberation League. So, publication of such a broadsheet might cause misunderstanding among the people. He argued, therefore, that it was necessary to stop publication; and he advised that the few copies of those issues which had already been published be sent to Chinese government offices and the rest be destroyed and in no case be distributed to the people. There was nothing unusual about it and the matter had occurred long ago. I bring it up here now just to show how President Ho had given us direct guidance on the use of strategy and tactics.

During the preparation for the inaugural meeting of the Liberation League, the Viet Minh asked the Chinese authorities to help train a number of dynamiters as well as military cadres (President Ho hoped that these people would afterwards come back with the guns that had been issued to them). The Chinese authorities readily agreed to this request with the ulterior motive of seizing this opportunity to brainwash our cadres and transform them into their own lackeys.

After the establishment of the Liberation League, cadres from Cao Bang, Lang Son, Thai Nguyen and the plains area arrived for training. The demolition training class of 12 students was set up at Dalongtan near Chen Baocang's Command

Post in Jingxi. This group of students would go back to Viet Nam after some 20 days of training. The military training class consisted of about 60 men. The Chinese authorities had this training class in Tiandong, using the excuse that materials were in short supply in Jingxi. Their real purpose was to keep them away for the convenience of control. While these students were still in Tiandong, Comrade Le Thiet Hung was placed in charge of them on our recommendation. Later, the Chinese authorities managed to have him replaced with one of their own men. They also did their best to prevent us from keeping in touch with the students. Then, they moved the training class to Nanning, even farther away from Jingxi. After much delay the training class actually began towards the end of 1941. During the training, the Chinese authorities tried every means to cause schisms among the students and win them over, but all in vain.

Meanwhile, the Chinese authorities tried to know more about our strength. Zhang Fakui suggested sending Colonel Lu to make an inspection tour of Viet Nam. President Ho instructed us to agree to his request. In Viet Nam Colonel Lu travelled through many villages, deep forests, high mountains, rivers and marshlands and was often pricked by leeches. He frequently ran into our armed forces and had to bypass enemy posts and strongholds. In the daytime he had to stay in the homes of the local people or in caves. It was only at night that he could travel. The journey was really exhausting and full of danger. However, wherever he went, he was warmly received by the people of the Tay, Man, Nung and Kinh nationalities, who called him their friend and ally. It was President Ho who had carefully arranged for the guides who took him around to different places and for the reception he received.

After completing his inspection and returning to Jingxi, Colonel Lu wrote a 50-page report (which he allowed us to read) and submitted it to Zhang Fakui. His conclusion was: "In the several provinces I inspected, more than 80 per cent of the masses support the Viet Minh [in fact, he only visited, through our arrangement, some places near the border]. China

has to collaborate with the Viet Minh if it wishes to do an effective job in Viet Nam." Although he overstated some things in his report in order to make himself look better, the above conclusion conformed with reality.

Something very ridiculous happened at that time. Truong Boi Cong went to Pingmeng right after the inaugural meeting of the Liberation League ended. A few days later when our comrades were having a get-together, Truong Boi Cong was arrested in Pingmeng for his involvement in smuggling. He was, indeed, a smuggler. With his support, some of his former military students stationed on the border smuggled goods from Viet Nam to China and moved strategic materiel from China to Viet Nam for Japanese and French troops there. Sometimes they used force to smuggle goods across the border and beat up customs officers. But this was not the chief reason for his arrest. It was because of political reasons.

The root of his troubles lay in the fact that Truong Boi Cong had met with successive setbacks in his work ever since the Kuomintang started to use him. First, in Liuzhou we had him cross our names off his work team list. Second, the 40-odd students studying in Jingxi wrote a letter complaining about him after they returned to Viet Nam. Third, ever since he went to work in Jingxi, he had failed to recruit any Vietnamese from Viet Nam or to dispatch anybody to go to Viet Nam. The Viet Minh, on its part, had been able to transfer cadres and students whenever they wanted to and the flow had never ceased. Truong Boi Cong courted his grievous failure in the contest of strength with Viet Nam when the Liberation League was founded. He proved himself to be terribly inept.

There was still one other political reason. He had sold certificates of appointment to some overseas Chinese who hoped to get ready-made posts and enjoy all sorts of privileges once the Chinese troops entered Viet Nam. The French government had to lodge an official protest with the Chongqing government. That was the immediate cause for the order that Chiang Kai-shek gave to Zhang Fakui to arrest Truong Boi

Cong. In fact, the arrest was designed to teach Truong Boi Cong a lesson and to turn him into a more subservient vassal. The arrest was also meant a warning to others that Chiang's men could arrest anyone they wished to, for all power was in their hands.

After the arrest of Truong Boi Cong, the troops under his command were reassigned to different command posts. Almost all revolutionary activities in Jingxi came under the control of the Viet Minh.

In May 1941 the Eighth Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee was held in Pac Bo and I was notified that I should go back to Viet Nam to attend the Session. During the Session, I had to travel frequently between Pac Bo and the Chinese border to post guards in the region north of Pac Bo so as to ensure smooth progress of the Session. (Chu Van Tan was responsible for security in areas south of Pac Bo in the direction of Lang Son.) Therefore, I was not able to be present at the Session from beginning to end.

The Party's line and principles set forth at the Session were recorded in Party documents. I would like to mention two things here which impressed me deeply at that time:

—In accordance with President Ho's proposal, the Central Committee decided to rename the Anti-Imperialist Front of Indo-China the Front of Vietnamese Independence League (Viet Minh for short). In this way, the Viet Minh, which we formed in early 1936 in China to obtain legal status and which started to do some practical work under the guidance of President Ho as late as the end of 1940, now became a broad united front for uniting national salvation organizations. The Viet Minh thus achieved its strategic objective of "uniting all classes, political parties and groups, national salvation organizations and religious circles in order to resist France and Japan" as set forth in the Resolution of the Eighth Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee.

—The participants were in favour of President Ho taking up the post of General Secretary of the Central Executive

Committee of the Party to exercise direct leadership of the revolutionary movement nationwide. But President Ho firmly declined, suggesting instead that Comrade Truong Chinh who all along had directed the work of the Party in Viet Nam be the General Secretary. Comrade Truong Chinh and all members of the Central Committee, however, still considered President Ho their teacher endowed with the supreme power of leadership.

After the conclusion of the Session, Truong Chinh, Hoang Quoc Viet and others returned to the plains area. Because communication lines between Pac Bo and the plains area were under the enemy's rigorous control, they had to cross the border into China and, bypassing Longzhou, return by way of That Khe and Lang Son. This trip was arranged by Cao Hong Lanh. When passing the sentry posts of the Chinese Kuomintang troops, Cao showed the South China Working Corps pass that Li Jishen had given earlier. In this way they reached their destiny without an obstacle.

I left for Longzhou to do organizational work there. My chief mission was to set up a Viet Minh office in Longzhou and recommend Cao Hong Lanh to be director of the office.

During this period, I talked to Hoang Van Kieu and Be Chan Hung, who had come from Lang Son, about the programme and style of work of the Viet Minh and sent them back to improve work in the Hoi Hoan area and the area bordering on Viet Nam and China. This work had helped establish contact between Cao Bang, Lang Son, Thai Nguyen and other places down south.

The work of the Viet Minh proceeded smoothly. On the other hand, the plot hatched by the Chinese Kuomintang and preparations for the entry of Chinese troops into Viet Nam met with difficulties. The Chinese authorities and particularly Chen Baocang who was directly responsible for the Command Post in Jingxi were well aware of this. Chen felt a great need to find a way out.

Chen Baocang had previously placed all his hope in

Truong Boi Cong. Now that Truong had been arrested, he had only Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao to rely on, because these two people held "positions of responsibility" in the Viet Minh and because he felt that they were trustworthy.

Around the time of the founding of the Liberation League, Chen Baocang thought highly of us, was nice to us and tried to win us over. Every now and then he would invite us to dinner. Every one or two weeks he would ask us to give a report on the situation in Viet Nam to the staff of his Command Post and people from other offices. Each time Chen himself would come to the gate to meet us, shaking hands with us. The moment we entered the assembly hall, everybody would stand up to salute us the way students in a training class would do to their instructors.

On one occasion, Chen even indicated his intention to appoint me colonel officer "for the sake of convenience in his liaison work". But we knew very well that he intended to turn us into his subordinates at his beck and call. We reported this to President Ho and declined Chen's offer. Just then, however, Nguyen Hai Than called his daughter and son-in-law to Jingxi and requested that the Command Post give them jobs. We tried to explain things to Nguyen and unequivocally demanded that he withdraw his request. Disregarding our advice, he made his request, albeit in secret.

Nguyen Hai Than had joined us to secure fame and rank. But in his contact with us he found that we were devoted to revolutionary work and paid little attention to fame or gain and that there was nothing beneficial to him. Moreover, Tran Bao, a renegade to the Party, helped him to mastermind a scheme to edge us out of the leadership so that they would cut in and control everything. They had informed Chen Baocang that we were Communists and concocted evidence to prove it. Consequently, a few months after the Liberation League was founded, Chen Baocang became cold to us and sometimes even said to our faces that we were Communists. Worse still, something totally absurd happened: Yang Jirong brazenly asked Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap to go to Chongqing to

study the Three People's Principles! We went back to Pac Bo and reported all these new developments to President Ho. After careful deliberation he decided that Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, Le Thiet Hung, Cao Hong Lanh and a few other comrades return to Viet Nam at once. I would stay to maintain our stronghold in Jingxi and ease as much as possible our strained relations with Nguyen Hai Than. Our venerable Mr. Le Nhuan Chi, Pham Viet Tu and Ma Thanh Kinh were to stay with me in Jingxi.

After most of our comrades had gone back to Viet Nam, Nguyen Hai Than looked triumphant and was more hostile to me. Chen Baocang was upset. He consulted with Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bo on every matter, being no longer nice to me as he had been before and scrupulously trying to avoid me. I went back to Pac Bo to report these developments and President Ho insisted on maintaining the status quo, being positive that the Central Committee would send someone else to work on Nguyen Hai Than and that hopefully Nguyen might continue to work with us. However, after my return to Jingxi this time, Nguyen Hai Than's attitude worsened. He persuaded Mr. Le Nhuan Chi, Pham Viet Tu and Ma Thanh Kinh to move away from the Viet Minh office. Thus they isolated me politically and created difficulties for me financially. He went so far as to report to Chen Baocang that the Viet Minh was plotting to assassinate him.

I returned to Pac Bo again at the end of 1941. President Ho said that, in view of the situation in Jingxi, he could arrange for me to go back to work in Viet Nam but that I would first have to go to Pingmeng and inform Chen Baocang of this lest Chen should think I was deserting. When I had made all preparations, Comrade Dam Minh Vien escorted me to Pingmeng where I stayed in the house of Liang Jingshan, Chief of the Office of the Command Post in Pingmeng. A "self-advertised progressive", Liang liked to exchange views with us on the anti-Japanese war in China and on the international situation. He often met with Le Quang Ba, Hoang Sam and Dam Minh Vien and had expressed sympathy for the

Vietnamese revolution. However, I spent only one night there, for I was arrested early the next morning.

V. My Arrest in Pingmeng

I got arrested in the house of Liang Jingshan not without cause. Liang had been a petty-bourgeois element and a landlord and was appointed by Chen Baocang Major Commissioner of Pingmeng. He frequently went to Jingxi to report on the situation in Pingmeng to the Command Post and often talked with us. He was friendly, sometimes offering us revolutionary books or telling us some "inside news". When Le Quang Ba, Dam Minh Vien and Hoang Sam came to Pingmeng, they often stayed at his place. As soon as I arrived from Pac Bo this time, I asked him to phone Chen Baocang that I was in Pingmeng, but he in a very roundabout way declined to do so. I became suspicious but was careful enough to act as if there were nothing wrong about it.

Liang was marrying a concubine that night. I spent several yuan to buy firecrackers to show my congratulations. At the wedding dinner, he asked me to sit at the same table with Tang An, who was head of Pingmeng Township and a teacher. Tang An had been a notorious bandit and had been appointed Colonel Counsellor by Chen Baocang. These people were honoured guests of Liang's and he was with them that entire evening.

After the banquet I went to sleep in a guest room in Liang's house. Early the next morning, he came to my bedside and woke me up saying, "Comrade Ly, the Township Head would like to see you." I opened my eyes and saw four village guards standing there with Mauser pistols. They made me quickly to put on my clothes to go to the village headquarters.

When I arrived, they handcuffed and locked me up in a side room without much ado and then left. Two hours later I saw the teacher, who had been sitting at the same banquet table with me, walking past the door. I immediately yelled for him

to stop, asking him to tell Liang Jingshan that I needed to see him. He hummed and hawed and walked away. At around 10 o'clock, Liang Jingshan had his servant bring me lunch, but I refused it. About an hour later, Tang An came in and was stunned and angry at seeing me handcuffed. He called the guards over and reprimanded them saying, "Don't you know Comrade Ly is a Vietnamese revolutionary? Even if you had orders for his arrest from the superiors, you have to treat him politely. There are so many of you armed with guns here, how could he escape or resist arrest? How can you be so brutal! Take his handcuffs off, now!"

When the guards took off my handcuffs, Tang An invited me to sit down at a table. He told me that he did not know whether it was the Command Post or the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang that had made the mistake and asked me not to take offence if those fellows had been impolite to me. In accordance with an order from higher authorities, he went on, the township headquarters was going to have me escorted on foot to Zhenbian County. It would take three days, and we would pass through three township headquarters. He promised to phone the heads of those headquarters along the way and ask them to look after me. He said further that I had to start out right away and with one of his staff to accompany me so that those fellows would not be rough with me. After that he ordered one of the township guards to buy me a bowl of rice noodles.

From what Tang An had said and done, I could tell that they were all putting on a show. Liang Jingshan, the township head, the teacher and Tang An were all in it together. When I finished the rice noodles, four township guards carrying guns and a rope made me get ready to leave. Tang An had one of his cadres armed with a Mauser pistol accompany me on the journey. I thought to myself that they would surely kill me secretly on the way. I had been told earlier that a Vietnamese named Vi Nam Bao, who was also being escorted, had been murdered on the way. Thus, every time when we were passing through a forest with a winding path before us, I would wait

for them to shoot me. After passing through several forests with nothing happening, I finally felt relieved. When it was beginning to get dark, we arrived at a township headquarters. The township head came out and, addressing me as "Comrade Ly", invited me in. He examined the papers on me and signed them. Then, saying good-bye to him, the guards left. The township head sat down to talk with me for a while and dinner was served. At dinner he advised me not to worry, saying that there must have been some misunderstanding and that it would all be cleared up once I arrived at the county seat. He arranged for me to sleep in the office that night. Bedding and a mosquito net were provided. As I was going to bed, several sentries were warming themselves by a fire outside the office.

The following day the township head sent two guards to accompany me on my journey. He telephoned the head of the next township telling him that Counsellor Tang (i.e., Tang An) had asked them to look after Comrade Ly and under no conditions maltreat him. We arrived at the second township headquarters in the afternoon where I was well received by the township head just as in the first township. This was also the case in the third township. I thought to myself, "Tang An has been a bandit. But why was he so kind to me? Bandit though he was, he still honoured the code of brotherhood." After giving it further thought, I came to the conclusion that it was all an attempt by Chen Baocang to buy me over.

As we got close to Zhenbian County, I took out my name card on which was printed "Ly Quang Hoa, member of the Central Executive Committee of the Vietnamese Liberation League" and on the back of which I wrote: "I wish to see the County Magistrate."

This county magistrate had been to Jingxi many times and had once been seated at the same table with us at a reception given by the Commissioner of the Tianbao Prefecture. He sympathized with the Vietnamese revolution and held Nguyen Hai Than in esteem. When I arrived at the county headquarters, I handed my name card to the reception clerk and asked him to pass it on to the county magistrate who was

attending the flag-lowering ceremony near the gate of the county government building. When the county magistrate saw my card, he immediately came over to meet me before going straight into the mailroom to pick up a letter and leading me directly into an inner room of the county government building.

Before talking with me, he opened the letter. Sitting opposite him, I could see the first paragraph of the letter. Obviously, it was Liang Jingshan who had made the accusations against me to Chen Baocang, who had ordered Liang to co-operate with the township head of Pingmeng to arrest me and take me to the county magistrate. After he had read the letter, the county magistrate said to me that probably someone believed that I was involved with the enemy. I knew that my arrest had been brought about by Nguyen Hai Than, whom the county magistrate held in high esteem and that the county magistrate would think ill of me if I told him the truth. So, I took the initiative by telling him that my arrest had nothing to do with suspicions by any quarters but because of an internal divergence of views on the guidelines of the revolution. Some of us believed that the revolution should rely mainly on our own strength—in other words, the Vietnamese people, while others held that a revolution could occur in Viet Nam once the Chinese troops entered Viet Nam and that, therefore, there was no need to mobilize the masses. I told him that I was in favour of the former view and perhaps that was why somebody had created trouble for me. To straighten things out, I suggested that he send me to Chen Baocang in Jingxi. He pondered over my suggestion for a while and replied, "I don't know much of your internal affairs, but I know you very well and will give you every possible help within my power." Then he called in the head guard and told him, "Comrade Ly is a Vietnamese revolutionary. Because of some misunderstanding, the higher authorities have ordered us to detain him for the time being. Now you go find a place for him and look after him well, pending further instructions."

I expressed my thanks to him and left with the head guard. I lived and ate with the head guard unlike any other

prisoners, who were under lock and key. Some twenty days later the county magistrate summoned me to the county government building and cheerfully told me, "Your problem has been cleared up. We have received instructions from Chen Baocang to send you to Jingxi." Then he told a police officer to make preparations for my departure the next day. This time I was escorted from Zhenbian to Jingxi by a police officer and four policemen. They were kind to me, treating me not at all like the way they would an ordinary criminal. After four days of walking, we arrived in Jingxi and the police officer escorted me to the Command Post. After we had gone through all the formalities there, he bade me farewell, giving me a military salute and saying he hoped to see me again in future.

It was approximately in early 1942 that I was escorted from Zhenbian to the Command Post in Jingxi. It was the same place where we had been as guests of honour at dinner parties and had given reports on the situation in Viet Nam. The man who received me was a section chief who had earlier often taken care of us and listened to our reports, so he was fairly courteous to me this time. He told me, "The director is in Liuzhou and will be back in two or three weeks. You can stay here and wait for him to come back to handle any problems that you now have." Then he arranged for me to live in a room close to his office and to eat at the Command Post. What's more, there was an orderly for me.

I still had some misgivings in the first few days, so I kept indoors. But when I was sure that nothing would happen, I took a walk outside the building. For six or seven days in a row, I observed that no one was watching me. One day I told the orderly I was going to take a walk, and he made no response and didn't report this to his superior either. Out in the street, I went straight to our former living quarters, where I found that there were no occupants other than the Vi Duc Minhs. From them I learned that Nguyen Hai Than and all the others had gone to Liuzhou and that Vi Duc Minh, now a staff member of the Command Post, had stayed behind. I walked

the streets of the county seat, noticing no changes there. All the pedestrians being Chinese, none of them recognized me or could possibly guess what was on my mind.

After a while, I returned to the Command Post and opened the letter addressed to me by Le Tung Son from Kunming and delivered to me by Vi Duc Minh. Ever since we left Kunming, neither Vu Anh nor I had maintained contact with the comrades there. Only after reading the letter did I know that Le Tung Son was still engaged in a struggle with Vu Hong Khanh's group. When he learned about our whereabouts through Chinese friends, he wrote that he wanted to come to Jingxi and discuss work. I immediately wrote him back, advising him to be careful about what tactics he used in his struggle with Vu Hong Khanh and to try his best to maintain the grass-roots organizations there. I also dissuaded him from coming to Jingxi because all the comrades had returned to Viet Nam and he would run into snags if he came. In the letter, I told the comrades in Kunming, whom I had been out of touch for more than a year, about the new developments and raised suggestions on other matters.

Twenty days had elapsed when Chen Baocang came back from Liuzhou and took a short rest before meeting with me. He said, "Some misunderstanding occurred recently much to your inconvenience. Now that all Vietnamese comrades are in Liuzhou, what's your plan?" I replied at once, "I can tell that you know me well. Otherwise, you wouldn't have had the Zhenbian county magistrate send me here. The section chief has been nice to me these last few days, which shows you bear me no ill will and I am grateful for that. Since there are no Vietnamese comrades here now, I wonder if it is possible for me to go to Liuzhou and join my Vietnamese comrades there so that we can discuss our work." He said with pleasure, "All right! I'll make the arrangements for you!" It happened that a car was to go there the next day. He prepared a letter of introduction for me to take to the headquarters of the Fourth War Zone (Zhang Fakui's headquarters). At the same time he gave me an envelope in which there was 500 yuan for travelling

expenses and had an aide-de-camp accompany me to Liuzhou. In actuality, he sent me to Liuzhou to keep me under surveillance.

Thus, the struggle went on, but it was different from the struggle of the past in which our opponent consisted only of Truong Boi Cong and company. Now we had to deal with Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao, with the ruling clique of the National Rehabilitation Army, and with the Chinese Kuomintang that was planning to set up a puppet Vietnamese government in order to facilitate their military entry into Viet Nam.

VI. Struggle in Liuzhou

Arriving in Liuzhou, our car did not stop in the street but proceeded directly to the Headquarters of the Fourth War Zone. It suddenly dawned upon me that they might detain me just as they had done in the Pingmeng Township Headquarters. The car stopped at the door of the reception room and the aide-de-camp asked me to get out of the car saying, "This is the Headquarters and you can find anyone by asking the reception desk." The officer at the reception desk told me promptly, "There is a radio operators training class of Vietnamese comrades which Ho Quoc Tuy was in charge of. Maybe you want to see him before anybody else."

It turned out that Ho Quoc Tuy was none other than Truong Quoc Tru nicknamed Black Tru. He was a Vietnamese residing in Yunnan. He had been opposed to Nguyen The Nghiep, Vu Hong Khanh and their like. He had met us before in Nanjing and with our help he had raised his political awareness and had been willing to throw in his lot with the Party. The training class he was in charge of now included four members of the Viet Minh and three members of the Vietnamese National Rehabilitation Party who sympathized with the Viet Minh. Black Tru was overjoyed to see me because Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao had spread news that I had been arrested and would surely be killed. He told me about the

activities of a few local groups of Vietnamese and that, aided and abetted by Tran Bao, Nguyen Hai Than claimed himself to be the representative of the Viet Minh. The students of the radio operators training class and the military training class neither accepted nor rejected the claim because they had no knowledge of the response in Viet Nam or in Jingxi. Hence they adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

I spent that day and dined together with Black Tru. We talked through the night. I learned from him the following facts:

Now Nguyen Hai Than had received a sum of fund amounting to several thousand yuan from Zhang Fakui and had been provided rent-free with a two-storey housing. The venerable Le Nhuan Chi, Pham Viet Tu, Ma Thanh Kinh, Tu Chi Kien and Truong Trung Phung all stayed with him. Nguyen Hai Than discussed work with Tran Bao only, leaving the others in the dark. All the money Nguyen Hai Than received from Zhang Fakui was completely in Nguyen's hands. Some comrades had no shoes to wear and no money to buy them. Nguyen certainly would not give them the money. The venerable Le Nhnan Chi often suffered from abdominal pains, but Nguyen never offered him money to buy medicine.

I asked why Truong Trung Phung had turned away from Truong Boi Cong to follow Nguyen Hai Than now. Black Tru told me that after Truong Boi Cong had been arrested in Jingxi, his followers had deserted him one after another. Truong Trung Phung joined the group led by Nguyen Hai Than and now that he found that Nguyen was not good, he wished to be closer to us. If we did our job right, we might win him over. There was a group of National Rehabilitation Army people here, Black Tru added, whom the Chinese authorities had transferred from Longzhou and who were now stationed at Daqiao, where the former office of Truong Boi Cong's was located. It was very difficult to get in touch with them, as was the case with any other unit of the Chinese army.

Thus, I learned about Nguyen Hai Than's activities and where he lived. I planned to stay at Black Tru's for a few days

longer so as to know more about him and work out a concrete strategy. However, I came across Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao in the street the next day, both of whom were struck dumb at seeing me. To set their minds at rest, I told them that I had been lucky enough this time to get a travel stipend and a travel permit from Director Chen. Otherwise, I would have had to spend a lot of time and effort trying to get to the place. Then I asked them where they stayed. Nguyen answered evasively to the effect that they didn't have a permanent residence. But I pressed, "Then, where do you live now?" "At the Global Hotel," said Nguyen, "I am sorry but I have some business to attend to now. The hotel attendant will show you to my room." Then he took out a piece of paper from his pocket, pretending to write down his room number. Since I knew he was lying, I said, "Don't bother. I'll be able to find it." These were the only words we exchanged. The evening of the following day, Black Tru told Pham Viet Tu to bring Truong Trung Phung and Ma Thanh Kinh to a previously agreed-upon place to meet me. After exchanging some information, we reached the conclusion that the first thing for me to do was try to move to Nguyen Hai Than's place where together with other comrades I could acquire legitimate political status and thus be able to wage struggle and solve other problems.

In line with the plan which we had worked out after detailed discussion, I went to Nguyen Hai Than's residence, leaving my luggage at Black Tru's. I went there when both Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao were out. A few hours later, Nguyen Hai Than came back and saw me sitting there in a dignified manner. He was at a loss what to say or do. I said to him immediately, "Before coming to Liuzhou, the Command Post told me your address. That is why I asked you not to bother about writing down your room number at the Global Hotel. I have come here today to tell you the truth: only if we unite can the revolutionary cause be successful and can we gain a foothold in Liuzhou. I have worked in China for a long time and have made many friends. If I want to find a place to live, I can get help from them, of which I am positive. However, if

each of us lives in a different place, this will leave a bad impression on the Chinese authorities and on those groups of Vietnamese working here. This will not help our work, either. Now, I hope Nguyen, our venerable Le and everybody present here will consider carefully whether I am right and whether it is necessary to do what I have just proposed. I am going back to where I've been staying and I'll come back here again a few days later."

Then, venerable Le, Pham Viet Tu, Tu Chi Kien, Truong Trung Phung and Ma Thanh Kinh reasoned with Nguyen Hai Than, insisting that Ly Quang Hoa be invited back there, lest no members of the Viet Minh in Liuzhou would continue to support Nguyen Hai Than. Nguyen kept silent.

Two days later I went there again with no luggage as if I were just dropping in on them. Everybody was eating downstairs and greeted me warmly. Nguyen Hai Than, however, said nothing. After the meal Nguyen's wife and children cleared the table while all others went upstairs. During our conversation I spoke only of the revolutionary situation, with no mention of my residence. All the people present said, "Old Ly should come here and live with us." Nguyen Hai Than still said nothing and I went on talking about the revolution. Then I stood up to leave, saying in conclusion, "It's all right for me to live in another place, but since the two venerable gentlemen and others hold that it will benefit our work if I come and live here, I'll move here in a couple of days." In this way, the question of where to live was settled.

After I moved into Nguyen Hai Than's place, I had contacts with many comrades and was much better informed.

—Truong Boi Cong's Faction

After Truong Boi Cong was arrested in Jingxi, his men were put under the direct control of Chen Baocang, who broke them up into different groups. Only Truong Trung Phung went to follow Nguyen Hai Than. Truong Boi Cong was now in Liuzhou. Though placed under surveillance, he enjoyed preferential treatment. His name was still mentioned here and there,

but he never showed up in public. His activities, if any, were confined to secret meetings with Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao or with Hoang Luong and Nong Kinh Du.

—The National Rehabilitation Army Faction

This faction consisted of some 500 men who were all at Daqiao, the place where Truong Boi Cong's work team had earlier been stationed. They were led by Nong Kinh Du and Hoang Luong, with Luong Van Y serving as commander. Nong was a landlord of Loc Binh (Lang Son Province). He became a leader because most members of this army were either his tenants or peasants who rent his land. He had been appointed counsellor by the Chinese Kuomintang and provided with a separate residence. He stayed idle every day. His son Nong Quoc Long was a company commander under Luong Van Y. This army, formerly stationed in Shangjin and now in Liuzhou, was regarded by the Chinese Kuomintang as a special detachment and Nong Kinh Du and Hoang Luong as their subordinates who actually had no power at all.

This National Rehabilitation Army was composed of people with different backgrounds. Some were compelled to join, like Nong Kinh Du's tenants, others were pressganged to serve as cooks or porters; and still others were teachers or clerks who had followed them blindly. When assembled at Daqiao to receive fascist military training, the former teachers, clerks and workers came out against Nong Kinh Du and Hoang Luong and demanded that they be put in a separate unit. The Chinese Kuomintang put them up at a small hotel for separate management in order to make use of them in future. In Shangjin I had met the seven or eight people who broke away from this faction. They had at that time indicated to me that they pinned their hopes on the Viet Minh. However, when they came to Liuzhou and discovered what Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao, who proclaimed themselves "leaders" of the Viet Minh, did was at variance with the stated principles of the Viet Minh, they showed distrust and contempt.

—The Group of Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao and Other Members of the Viet Minh

A. Nguyen Hai Than.

He had been a very active person in the revolutionary movement when he was invited in early 1936 by Mr. Ho Hoc Lam to go to Nanjing to help establish the Viet Minh. Later, he returned to Guangdong because no assistance was forthcoming from the Chinese Kuomintang.

At the end of 1940 when Truong Boi Cong won the trust of Chiang Kai-shek's clique, he followed Truong to Jingxi and then went to Guilin to solicit aid. Just at that point Vo Nguyen Giap, Vu Anh and Cao Hong Lanh came to Jingxi. We had Vo Nguyen Giap get in touch with him and win him over to our side. Following President Ho's brilliant suggestion, we asked Mr. Ho Hoc Lam in Guilin to act on our behalf, thereby giving prominence to the role of the Viet Minh and also winning over Nguyen Hai Than. One day we held a press conference presided over by Nguyen Hai Than, at which Vo Nguyen Giap reported on the work and impact of the Viet Minh in Viet Nam. Chiang Kai-shek's *Saodang* (*Mopping-up*) *Daily* carried a dispatch about the conference. On reading the news in Jingxi, Truong Boi Cong flew into a rage, throwing the newspaper to the floor and cursing, "This fellow Nguyen Hai Than is as stupid as an ass!" Therefore, when the inaugural meeting of the Liberation League was held in Jingxi, Nguyen Hai Than remained with us in his capacity as representative of the Viet Minh. Later on, Truong Boi Cong was arrested, and the Viet Minh, finding it difficult to carry on its activities, had to send the majority of the cadres back to Viet Nam. Then, Nguyen Hai Than asked Chen Baocang to arrest me in an attempt to gain dominance over those members of the Viet Minh who had stayed behind. Nguyen Hai Than could then claim to be the leader of the Viet Minh and carry out his deceptive political stratagems.

B. Tran Bao.

All the above-mentioned activities which Nguyen Hai Than carried out after his arrival in Jingxi were masterminded by Tran Bao, who had long since been a traitor. In 1937 the Communist Party of Siam assigned him the task of leading

scores of overseas Chinese Youth to return to China to join the New Fourth Army. Fearing the hardships of war, he left those young people stranded in Hongkong while he himself fooled about. By the end of 1940, he bumped into Nguyen Hai Than and the two fitted in readily. He had once been a Party member, but every time he met us, he said he was a follower of the Party. In fact, he had long been an enemy agent. Through Nguyen Hai Than he informed the Chinese Kuomintang of everything he knew about the Party as well as the Party's principles for work. Sometimes, he did it by himself. It was none other than Tran Bao who plotted behind the scenes to create trouble for our leading comrades in Jingxi. Moreover, after our comrades returned to Viet Nam and I was arrested, he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel and, wearing the uniform of the Kuomintang army, he went to the Tiandong military training class (most students of this class were Viet Minh members who had come from Viet Nam) to deceive and bully the students. At the same time, he claimed to the Chinese authorities and the National Rehabilitation Army as well as other factions of Vietnamese that he and Nguyen Hai Than were Viet Minh representatives, though this had never been acknowledged by any member of the Viet Minh.

C. Members of the Viet Minh, Whom Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao Claimed to Represent, Could Be Divided into Three Groups.

The first, largest group consisted of 60 members who had been sent from Viet Nam in groups to attend the military training class. The Chinese Kuomintang authorities trained them first at Tiandong and arranged for Tran Bao to visit them. Then they were transferred to a place near an airfield, some seven or eight kilometres from Liuzhou, for separate training. They were under very strict supervision and only two or three trainees were permitted to go out on Sundays. That was the only chance they could made contact with members of the Viet Minh in Liuzhou. Hoang Minh Thao had more chances than Hoang Van Thai to go out.

The second group was composed of students of a radio

operators training class, including four members of the Viet Minh and three members of the National Rehabilitation Army who had secretly joined the Viet Minh. These National Rehabilitation Army people had been recruited by the Viet Minh in too great a haste; there was actually no need for it. I criticized the comrades of the Viet Minh and told them to go on helping these people to heighten their political awareness and to see to it that those people were not to take part in the regular activities of the Viet Minh as full members until after they completed their training, were tempered in practical work and proved loyal to the Party. Among these people Black Tru was the interpreter. He also did political work among them.

The last group consisted of those who had lived at Nguyen Hai Than's place (which was, for all intents and purposes, the Viet Minh office). Nguyen and Tran Bao continued their clandestine activities separately. The other people were closely united. By then Truong Trung Phung no longer had any faith in Nguyen and Tran. He was biding his time while trying to keep abreast of new developments in the situation.

One Sunday a membership meeting of the Viet Minh was convened after careful preparation. At about 8 o'clock in the morning, students of the radio operators training class, Black Tru and members who lived in the office had already arrived, except the students of the military training class, who were under strict supervision. At the beginning of the meeting, a student from the radio operators training class said, "Since Comrade Ly Quang Hoa was arrested a few months ago, we have had no knowledge at all of the situation either at home or abroad. At the same time, we have heard that our work abroad has failed for lack of support from the Chinese authorities and that some leading comrades have fled back to Viet Nam. We were also told that Comrade Ly Quang Hoa had probably been murdered. We are happy to have Comrade Ly here with us. Would you please tell us something about the domestic and international situation, the latest developments, and the prospects of our future work?"

I said, "I haven't kept up with the developments since my arrest. I suggest our venerable Nguyen Hai Than and elder brother Tran Bao tell you about them." Nguyen blushed and said, "I know nothing, how can I make the report?" Tran sat there without uttering a word. The atmosphere became tense all of a sudden—it was hot and suffocating, as if a storm was approaching.

Then I broke the silence saying, "If venerable Nguyen and elder brother Tran do not want to speak, let me brief you on some major developments.

"First, the movement led by the Viet Minh has spread to northern, central and southern parts of our country, so the revolutionary situation at home is very favourable to us.

"Second, I want to say a few words about the situation abroad, which, to be precise, means in our terminology work in the area of foreign affairs. In foreign affairs, we have to take the stand of a revolutionary organization and the stand of our nation in establishing ties with other countries on an equal footing. We shall not maintain any ties with those people who do not regard us as representatives of a revolutionary organization and of our nation. Some of our leading comrades have returned to Viet Nam in order to help promote work at home. This is not running away. At all times a revolutionary organization has to concentrate its cadres where they are needed most. Now is the time when there is a lot more vitally important work to be done at home, compared with abroad where there is no need to keep too many cadres here. I see no reason why this should be called a failure in our work relating to foreign affairs. True, there were some people who, while ostensibly involved in such work abroad, sought after their own or their families' position and gain at the expense of the interests of the revolution and the nation. Such people cannot really be considered cadres working in the field of foreign affairs. They are traitors."

Glaring, Black Tru raised a clenched fist, saying, "Such traitors of the revolution should be eliminated!" As if he had received a head-on blow, Nguyen Hai Than turned pale and stood up ready to go downstairs. One comrade held his hands

and asked him to sit down. Struggling to take his hands away, Nguyen said, "You don't stop one from going to toilet, do you?" Then he went downstairs. Seeing this, Tran Bao stood up too, and went to his bedroom next door, locking it from inside.

Staring at each other, the comrades burst into laughter. "There is no escape for Tran Bao," added Black Tru. "If he refuses to come out, we'll smash the door open and drag him out." Scared, Tran reluctantly came out of his room and took his seat.

As for Nguyen Hai Than, we zeroed in on his "Achilles' heel", namely, he had claimed to the Chinese authorities that he was the leader of the Viet Minh. One Viet Minh comrade declared, "The meeting of the Viet Minh today is presided over by venerable Nguyen Hai Than. If he walks out of the meeting before it is over, we shall adopt a resolution to expel him from the Viet Minh and then inform all the Vietnamese here and the Chinese authorities of the resolution." Nguyen Hai Than was scared too when he heard this. When someone went downstairs to "invite him" back upstairs, he had no other choice but to come back.

The meeting went on. A first blow of such magnitude was enough for Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao. We wanted to keep them in the Viet Minh because we would need their help in our struggle in various fields when the worst came to the worst. To cool the atmosphere, I said,

> Some comrades are not patient enough at today's meeting, and this has made our venerable Nguyen and elder brother Tran unhappy. However, I hope both of you, for your part, will understand that at present everybody is concerned with our organization and the progress of the revolutionary work and that your attitude in this regard has offended them. There's nothing to complain about them. The principle governing our work is democratic centralism, whereby the minority is subordinate to the majority, the lower level is subordinate to the higher level, and the entire membership is subordinate to the Central Committee. Acting on this principle, we can smooth out differences of views among

us through discussion. Venerable Nguyen is one of the Viet Minh leaders. That's true. As early as 1936, he took an active part in the activities to help found the Viet Minh and has since been on the side of the Viet Minh. Now confronted with the complicated situation in Liuzhou, we should foster mutual understanding and unite closely in order to cope with new developments, resolve problems, and help the revolution. We should let bygones be bygones and forget about what has happened at today's meeting. And I hope venerable Nguyen, elder brother Tran Bao, and everybody else will not take it to heart.

This seemed to have saved face for Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao. The other people all seemed to have gotten my point and said in unison, "We agree with Comrade Ly's opinion, and we shall do our work accordingly." There the meeting ended.

Intense preparation for the entry of the Chinese troops into Viet Nam was under way. By then, however, due to incompetence on the part of Nguyen Hai Than and his followers, a Vietnamese revolutionary organization, whose exclusive purpose was to aid this operation, had not yet been established. So, the Headquarters of the Fourth War Zone itself had to establish such an organization. It sent a secret letter to Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao inviting them to take part in a meeting to discuss the Vietnamese revolution. This letter somehow fell into Truong Trung Phung's hands. Truong showed it to me and asked what to do.

A meeting of the Viet Minh was called at once. When all members were present, Truong Trung Phung took out the letter and read it out loud. Being caught unawares, Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao had no idea what to do. Venerable Le Nhuan Chi, Pham Viet Tu and Black Tru all said, "The Vietnamese revolution is a matter of vital importance. Since the Fourth War Zone has invited us to take part in the discussion, why, we must go. But only Comrade Ly Quang Hoa has a full understanding of the situation both at home and abroad. So we should ask the Fourth War Zone to have his

name added to the list of invitees. Thus we shall have three people there when important issues arise."

Finding it inappropriate to oppose this suggestion, Nguyen Hai Than had to agree. Tu Chi Kien was elected to draft to Zhang Fakui an official letter according to the contents we had already thought out. Nguyen Hai Than had to sign and seal it without making any changes and then had it dispatched immediately. The letter, okayed and sealed by Zhang Fakui, was returned that afternoon.

Early next morning, Nguyen Hai Than, Tran Bao and I arrived at the Headquarters of the Fourth War Zone. Seated in the meeting room were Major General Yang Jirong and two overseas Chinese, Mai Cong Nghi and Duong Thanh Dan, in addition to the Vietnamese. After a while, Wu Shi, Chief of Staff of the Fourth War Zone, who presided over the meeting on behalf of Zhang Fakui, said, "We are all here today to discuss the founding of a Vietnamese Anti-Aggression League. I hope that a consensus can be reached and that the organization be set up as soon as possible. This is urgent and brooks no delay." Then Duong Thanh Dan took out a printed programme and read it aloud. A moment of silence ensued before I stood up and asked for permission to speak. I said,

I have listened to the programme only once and thus need time to carefully review all its points. But tentatively I would like to discuss a few points as follows:

With respect to "taking the Three People's Principles as the programme for building Viet Nam in the future," I believe the Three People's Principles are very good. But, I'm afraid that "equalization of landownership and regulation of capital" might keep the landlord class and the bourgeoisie away from us.

Should we "make Viet Bac the revolutionary base"? To my knowledge, the territory of Viet Nam extends more than 1,000 kilometres and the Bac Ky (north part), Trung Ky (central part) and Nam Ky (south part) are separated by numerous mountains and rivers.

To fight Japan in Viet Nam, we have to set up bases in each part and even each province. So I think this point

calls for further discussion.

I think "the entry of Chinese troops into Viet Nam" will provide favourable conditions for the Vietnamese revolution. But what we have here is a programme for the Vietnamese revolution, so it should deal with the revolution, propaganda work and organizing the masses. So, I'm afraid it may not be enough just to mention the "entry of Chinese troops into Viet Nam".

When I finished my statement, Wu Shi pulled a long face. To make the atmosphere less tense, Mai Cong Nghi immediately said, "Some of the opinions expressed by Comrade Ly Quang Hoa merit further consideration and discussion. Perhaps we might form a preparatory committee to look into this programme and discuss the specific work to be done in future."

It seemed that everything had been arranged before the meeting. At this moment, Duong Thanh Dan went over to Wu Shi's side and handed him a piece of paper on which several names were written. Then Wu said, "I propose the preparatory committee consist of the following members: Nguyen Hai Than, Nong Kinh Du, Nong Quoc Long (son of Nong Kinh Du), Hoang Luong, Tran Bao, Mai Cong Nghi and Duong Thanh Dan."

(The name of Truong Boi Cong was not on the list because he had not yet been released from prison in Jingxi.)

I stood up and said, "I agree to the Headquarters' proposal as far as the Chinese side is concerned. As for the Vietnamese members, I think the Vietnamese comrades should have a chance to exchange views among themselves."

I was promptly interrupted by Wu Shi, who said that the preparatory committee was but a temporary body which was to be dissolved after fulfilling its task. It was nothing important and, therefore, there was no need to bother about its membership.

All others agreed with him.

Wu Shi then stood up, declared the meeting close, left without saying good-bye.

From that time on, Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao went

to the committee meeting every morning after breakfast. Though it had been decided that they should report to us on new developments every day after the meeting, they never did it. They only said nothing important had happened.

One day I met Duong Thanh Dan. I knew he was a curious guy prying into other people's affairs. I said to him, "Mr. Duong, how is the preparatory work going? I have a few comments to make on the work of this organization, but I don't know who I should talk to." He said I could let him know my views, which he would convey to the meeting.

I said that I did not know what questions they had been discussing just now, so it was difficult for me to express views appropriate at the moment.

He said, "I have here the minutes of the meeting. You can read them and tell me whatever comments you have. I guarantee to pass them on accurately." Then he took a copy of the minutes from his portfolio and gave it to me. Then he made an appointment for our next meeting.

It turned out that the preparatory committee had not at all discussed the programme of the so-called Vietnamese Anti-Aggression League but, instead, had only discussed the question of entry of the Chinese troops into Viet Nam. Moreover, it had decided on a list of the members of a puppet provisional government:

Chairman	Nguyen Hai Than
Defence Minister	Hoang Luong
Foreign Minister	Mai Cong Nghi
Finance Minister	Duong Thanh Dan
Propaganda Minister	Tran Bao
Adviser	Nong Kinh Du

.....

This was a crucial matter! We had to discuss countermeasures. The following day the Viet Minh called a meeting, at which I put forth my points as follows.

Venerable Nguyen and elder brother Tran have been attending meetings for a week but have kept us in the dark, saying that there is nothing important. Actually, things have developed way beyond our imagination. They

have decided to form a provisional government after the Chinese troops have entered Viet Nam and have worked out a list of members of the government.

Venerable Nguyen Hai Than is to be appointed Chairman. But what will be the functions and powers of the Chairman?

Hoang Luong was raised up by the Japanese. What is he to be appointed Defence Minister for?

Mai Cong Nghi is an overseas Chinese. How can he be the Foreign Minister?

Duong Thanh Dan is also an overseas Chinese. And how can he be the Finance Minister?

Nong Kinh Du is utterly ignorant of politics. How can he be the Adviser?

And elder brother Tran Bao, since the Defence and Foreign Ministries are in other people's hands, what are you going to publicize and for whom?

The Defence, Foreign Affairs and Finance Ministries are all vital organs of the state apparatus in any country, and they should, of course, be in the hands of revolutionaries. Why didn't you dare to express your opinions when they made pro-Japanese element and overseas Chinese heads of those Ministries? Moreover, you didn't report this to the Viet Minh. Now that things have come to such a pass, I don't know what venerable Nguyen and elder brother Tran think of this matter and how you are going to explain this to the Viet Minh.

It was true that when discussing and working out the list of members of the provisional government Nguyen Hai Than had been displeased at the lack of power and authority which should be vested in him, but he dared not speak out. As I had just hit upon a sore point of his, he lost his temper and said bluntly, "That's enough! I won't go to the meetings any more. To hell with them!"

From then on, Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao stopped attending the meeting, staying at home for several days on end. Zhang Fakui became anxious and wrote a letter asking for a general meeting of members of the preparatory committee in

an attempt to persuade them to show up. Nguyen Hai Than still refused to go. I said to Nguyen that he might offend Zhang Fakui that way and asked what if they, regardless of the consequences, went on with their scheme without him and Tran Bao. Nguyen Hai Than did not want to offend Zhang Fakui and was worried about his future position in the puppet government. Not knowing exactly how to cope with the situation, he asked for my advice.

After a break, I asked everybody to sit down again and then continued to give my views. I said,

> If anything, we must bring about a drastic change, that is, reorganize the preparatory committee so that we can play a more effective role in it. If the preparatory committee remains as it is today, any views we express will be ignored. I'd suggest that venerable Nguyen go ahead and see Zhang Fakui tomorrow. But he should go there in his capacity as member of the Viet Minh instead of member of the preparatory committee. That way, what he says will carry a lot more weight. Nguyen was very pleased and asked me and the others to go with him the next day.

Nguyen Hai Than, Tran Bao, venerable Le Nhuan Chi, Pham Viet Tu, Black Tru, Long Cong and myself went together to the Headquarters. All members of the preparatory committee were there when we walked in the reception room. They looked at us in amazement, wondering why so many people not on the preparatory committee had come when Zhang Fakui had only asked committee members to meet that day. However, nobody said anything, except that they exchanged meaningful glances with each other.

Before long Zhang Fakui came out of his room. Duong Thanh Dan shouted, "Attention!" and all the people were on their feet as if they were saluting a superior. Zhang Fakui walked over nonchalantly without shaking hands with anybody and sat in the seat of honour in front. He had no knowledge of who the members of the preparatory committee were and how the committee functioned. Taking it for granted that everybody there was a member of the committee, he said, "Tell me

about the progress of your work. I guess you have to speed up a bit! Just why are you going so slowly?"

Nguyen Hai Than had been unhappy long before the meeting. At that moment, he said abruptly, "We don't recognize the preparatory committee because it was not elected by us but appointed by Chief of Staff Wu."

Zhang Fakui was nonplussed, not knowing what this was all about. But Duong Thanh Dan, who was experienced and capable, added immediately, "Commander Zhang, Mr. Nguyen is right. Chief of Staff Wu did not accept all the opinions of the Vietnamese comrades when the preparatory committee was set up that day. It would be better for the Commander to let the Vietnamese comrades go back and discuss the matter among themselves and form their own preparatory committee." Extricated from the predicament he had been in, Zhang Fakui promptly agreed and suggested that the Vietnamese comrades speed things up. There ended the meeting.

On our way back Nguyen Hai Than was immensely proud of the victory he had won with his courage and straightforwardness. When we were back home, we asked him to sit together with us to make an assessment of what had just taken place and to discuss our next move. Nguyen Hai Than said at once, "Now we should take the initiative and call all the Vietnamese together and elect a new preparatory committee. Mr. Ly Quang Hoa and the rest of us should be on the committee, but the two overseas Chinese shouldn't. They can serve as assistants." Then, I asked the others to take the floor. They all indicated they needed to have more time to think about the matter; none of them spoke. I said, "Venerable Nguyen's idea is really simple and straightforward. But that would offend the Headquarters and Zhang Fakui, Wu Shi and Yang Jirong. Do you think that's right? In my opinion, we should take moderate measures; that is to say, to propose adding a few members to the existing preparatory committee. This will make things easier. Nguyen applauded, and the others expressed approval.

To add new members to the preparatory committee, we had thought of selecting one from the group that had broken

away from the National Rehabilitation Army. But from our contacts with them, we had learned that those people had come from complex backgrounds. They had helped to discredit Hoang Luong and Nong Kinh Du in the National Rehabilitation Army, but in other areas their usefulness was limited. Besides, to recommend one of them we would have to go through a lot of red tape. This would not necessarily be helpful, so we might as well choose one from our own Viet Minh members. After repeated deliberations, we and Nguyen Hai Than agreed that it would be enough to add only two members, Ly Quang Hoa and Pham Viet Tu. On the following day, Nguyen wrote a letter to Zhang Fakui recommending the two of us. Thus, Pham and I became members of the preparatory committee.

However, many difficulties still lay ahead of us and things certainly were not all smooth sailing.

Not long after that, members of the preparatory committee of the Vietnamese Anti-Aggression League were called again to meet at the Headquarters of the Fourth War Zone. Wu Shi and Yang Jirong did not show up, and Duong Thanh Dan assumed the airs of a chairman at the meeting. He said leisurely, "The preparatory committee discussed some questions at the past few meetings. Recently Nguyen suggested adding a couple of members to the committee before further discussion was conducted. Therefore, there is no prepared documents available today. Anybody can speak whatever he has on his mind." An awkward silence prevailed for a while before Mai Cong Nghi said, "Last time Comrade Ly Quang Hoa made a few comments on the programme, which are now under review by the Headquarters. I hope Comrade Ly will let us hear more of his views." I said, "The views I expressed the last time were related to the wording only. Today I would like to discuss the name and the nature of this organization. To my mind, the name 'Anti-Aggression League' has an international sense in it. For example, the China Branch of the International Anti-Aggression League can have foreigners like British and French as its members. It follows that the Vietnamese Anti-Aggression

League can be taken as a Viet Nam branch of the international organization. As the organization's programme has made it clear that it is an organization which provides guidance to the Vietnamese revolution, we have to reconsider whether the name of this organization is in keeping with the programme." Nobody spoke after me. Duong Thanh Dan swept his eyes over the faces of the participants as if he were pressing them to speak. Then, he said, "It seems that the question Comrade Ly has raised is not something that can be discussed right now. Let's put it aside and in the meantime I'll report to Commander Zhang and Chief of Staff Wu." Thus, the meeting ended. And the Headquarters of the Fourth War Zone had never called any more meetings of the committee ever since.

It was obvious that issues regarding how to organize the Vietnamese revolution and what course of action to take were not decided by the preparatory committee but by the Fourth War Zone or, rather, by Chongqing.

The situation in China's anti-Japanese war at the time was as follows: Thanks to the heroic fighting put up by the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army, the Communist Party had liberated vast areas behind the enemy lines. The Anti-Japanese United Army had intensified its operations in northeast China. On the frontal battlefield, though some patriotic generals were resolved to fight Japan, they had been defeated for lack of support from Chiang Kai-shek. Consequently, the Japanese troops had occupied the large cities. Worst of all, Wang Jingwei had set up in Nanjing a puppet regime in the service of Japan and in open opposition to all resistance forces. After Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbour and occupation of Hongkong, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma and many other regions in Asia, Britain and the United States were forced to enter the war. Encouraged by this development, Chiang Kai-shek had stepped up preparations for Chinese troops to go into Viet Nam. However, his stooges had been so incompetent that they had failed to this day to rig up a Vietnamese revolutionary organization for the purpose. Therefore, they had to reorganize their forces and recruit backbone members. When plans to set up the Vietnamese Anti-Aggression League flopped, they

called Vu Hong Khanh and Nghiem Ke To from Chongqing, released Truong Boi Cong, and got hold of Dang Nguyen Hung (for more details about him please see "My Life and Struggle in Nanjing", pp.85-95 above) and Nguyen Tuong Tam. At the end of 1942, they abandoned their plans to form the Vietnamese Anti-Aggression League and instead made preparations to establish a "Vietnamese Revolutionary League" purged of any Viet Minh members.

We had long expected that they would exclude the Viet Minh. So when we learned that Vu Hong Khanh and Nghiem Ke To would come, everyone advised me to leave. I agreed with them, because Nghiem Ke To was a secret agent from Chongqing who had known me when in Nanjing, while in Kunming Vu Hong Khanh had known that I was a Communist. When they came, my true identity would surely be revealed.

One day I asked to see Zhang Fakui. I told him frankly, "I came here to exchange views with the Vietnamese on the Vietnamese revolutionary movement. But I have now found that, just as you said before, the Vietnamese here are not interested in the revolution but are after their own personal gain. It will get nowhere working with these people. Since both Viet Nam and China are fighting Japan, I hope you will help me so that I will be able to do something for the resistance."

Zhang Fakui was very pleased at hearing my request because he had long intended to have me leave the place. He replied immediately, "If you like, I'll assign you to the Political Work Team in the Sino-Vietnamese Border Area at Jingxi, of which Wu Genhua is the leader. You'll get help there from Director Chen Baocang."

This was beyond my expectations! Jingxi was the best place for me to go to Viet Nam. I thanked him. The next day I received my letter of appointment as a translator of the Political Work Team in the Sino-Vietnamese Border Area. I would have the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Before my departure for Jingxi, I met members of the Viet Minh and put forth the following suggestions:

We have been opposed to the establishment of a Vietnamese Anti-Aggression League. If they insist on setting it up after my departure, our continuing to oppose it will boomerang on us. This is because most of the Vietnamese here, above all, the hundreds of people of the National Rehabilitation Army, wish to have a revolutionary organization led by Vietnamese themselves so that they can free themselves from the control which they have been subjected to for so many years. So, if they want to form an organization, just let them. And at the same time you should tell people that such an organization cannot be trusted because it can accomplish nothing under the leadership of such a bunch of people. In due course our views will prove correct, and you will thus preserve the prestige of the Viet Minh and win over the masses.

All those present agreed with me.

I bade them farewell and went back to Jingxi to make preparations for my return home.

VII. Preparations to Return Home

I left Liuzhou this time in a dignified manner, carrying with me a letter of a high-rank appointment and my travelling expenses for the trip back to Jingxi.

Things in Jingxi were entirely different from what it had been a year ago. The Viet Minh's office was closed, so there wasn't any comings and goings of their cadres. Truong Boi Cong's Vietnamese and overseas Chinese followers had all disappeared. There were even very few customers in the snack-shops and teahouses which had been bustling with business activity before I left. I didn't bump into a single acquaintance of mine from the past. Faced with such a desolate scene, I could not help missing the bygone days. However, I was certain that I could manage to go home once in Jingxi.

As part of the routine, being assigned to the Political Work Team in the Border Area, I had to report first to the

team leader Wu Genhua, who was pleased at seeing me and said, "Comrade Ly, your coming here will surely help the work of this team. We're very glad that you've come. How would you like the idea if we put you in charge of the publication of material in Vietnamese? The person in charge now is a National Rehabilitation Army cadre who was transferred here from Liuzhou. You demonstrated your proficiency when you served as interpreter for the dynamiters training class and at many meetings in the past. It was surely after careful consideration that Commander Zhang Fakui assigned you to this post."

I knew full well that here the work would involve only printing and distributing reactionary articles translated into Vietnamese. These materials, in fact, were either piled up in offices or scattered everywhere in border areas, because none of our people would read them. In principle, I should not do this sort of work and would have to find an excuse to decline it. I proposed, "Since you have already had a comrade from the National Rehabilitation Army in charge of this work, it will not be conducive to unity and may hinder our future work if you let me take his place. I suggest letting him continue doing this work, for I can help revise the manuscripts he translates or writes. This will benefit work and will be good for our relations. In addition, I can translate *The Three People's Principles*, which is an important political document and requires careful, accurate translation." Wu Genhua was convinced.

A few days later, I went to see Director Chen Baocang. He was quite kind to me, although he sounded a bit overbearing. When he had an appointment with me in the past, I was a guest. But now I was his subordinate. He said to me, "You are one of our cadres now. I hope you will do your work wholeheartedly. I trust you, but the Headquarters of the Fourth War Zone will not necessarily do so. In case any slip occurs on your part which, then, prompts intervention by the Headquarters, it will be hard for us to guarantee your safety. You have to realize that the Vietnamese revolution cannot succeed without our assistance. You can see that up to this date Lam Ba Kiet and Duong Hoai Nam have accomplished nothing since they

left Jingxi for Viet Nam. They are only operating in the border area. Your Team Leader Wu Genhua has assigned you a job and you should try your best to do it well." After saying a few words of courtesy, I left.

Several days passed after my arrival at Jingxi and I had not met anyone I had known before, so I knew little about the situation in Viet Nam, even less about the situation in the border area. What Chen Baocang had said unwittingly about Lam Ba Kiet and Duong Hoai Nam was a piece of important information for me. In the daytime I would translate *The Three People's Principles* and would take a walk outside the city gate early every morning as well as after supper and sometimes after walking a few kilometres I would turn back to see if I was shadowed. Nobody ever shadowed me.

At about 4 o'clock one cool afternoon, the telephone in my office rang. I picked up the phone and a voice said, "Deputy Director Deng Kuangyuan is inviting you to dinner at a hotel right outside the southern city gate at 6 o'clock this afternoon." I asked once again to ensure that I had understood the message and accepted the invitation with pleasure.

How strange! Deng Kuangyuan was a special agent and Yang Jirong's righthand man. He had gotten to know me very well during the struggle in Liuzhou. Why did he want to invite me to dinner that day? He was probably doing so in order to arrest me! With this in mind, I straightened the books, newspapers and stationery on the desk and got ready to go. I walked slowly towards the hotel to ascertain what might very well be a "set-up". Standing at the door were four soldiers holding rifles with bayonets. There was now no doubt that Deng Kuangyuan had invited me there to arrest me! I walked straight outside the city gate and then turned down a noisy street. I walked on, thinking of ways to head off the impending calamity.

How could I escape being arrested? By running to Bameng where there were people who had vowed to share their fate with me? No, it was out of the question! Jingxi was more than 20 km from Bameng and I would have to walk along the

highway for about ten kilometres before turning onto a side path. If I were arrested, there would be no way of having the others to come to my rescue. After giving the matter a lot of thought, I decided that I had no other choice. I figured among the guests there must be at least a couple of our own people who would inform the others in case I was arrested. I went to the hotel at 6 o'clock sharp. The senior captain of the Border Area Political Work Team greeted me and showed me to the hotel lobby. One of Deng Kuangyuan's section chiefs was waiting there as was Hoang Quoc Chinh, who had been Vu Hong Khanh's ruthless righthand man in Kunming. The section chief asked the guests to take their seats and said, "Deputy Director Deng entrusted me with the matter of inviting you all to have dinner here. But, much to his regret, he suddenly had some urgent matters to deal with and may not be able to come here in time to be with you this evening." The senior captain added, "The Deputy Director had intended to invite only Comrade Hoang Quoc Chinh today. But I suggested to the section chief that Mr. Ly also be invited, as he had just been made a lieutenant colonel of the Border Area Political Work Team by Commander Zhang Fakui. With the section chief's consent, I phoned Mr. Ly immediately as there was no time to send the invitation."

So that was how it was! This dinner was given in the name of Deng Kuangyuan just to stress the importance of the occasion. But, in fact, it was being hosted by the section chief. Although the section chief knew nothing about me, he extended the invitation to me on the advice of the captain. Hoang Quoc Chinh had known me a long time ago in Kunming. He picked up only a few terms like "Commander Zhang Fakui", "the Border Area Political Work Team" and "rank of lieutenant colonel" and, furthermore, the dinner invitation had been extended by Deng Kuangyuan, so he thought that, like him, I had been "bought" to be Deng's lackey. That was why he wasn't hostile to me when we were sitting together face to face. At dinner the section chief, the captain and I all chatted in Chinese. Hoang Quoc Chinh paid attention only to his food and didn't utter a word because he didn't know any Chinese.

He felt embarrassed. I told him that if he wanted to say something, he could say it in Vietnamese and I would interpret it for him, so he joined the chatting, relieving me the burden of having to keep up the conversation. While we were drinking coffee after dinner and were getting ready to leave, Deng Kuangyuan came in. He glanced at the people sitting at the table and, pretending not to see us, went straight upstairs to the room which he used as his office. A few minutes later, the section chief asked me and Hoang Quoc Chinh to go upstairs and meet Deng Kuangyuan. When we walked into his office, Deng stood up and reluctantly shook hands with us. Looking at Hoang Quoc Chinh only and not at me, he was being polite when he said, "I am so sorry to have kept you waiting so long. I had some business which prevented me from coming back earlier." I calmly interpreted this message to Hoang Quoc Chinh, reminding him to say thanks and good-bye to the Deputy Director so that the latter could have a rest. Hoang Quoc Chinh took my hint and spoke for a few minutes to Deng. In translating Hoang's remarks into Chinese, I made a couple of changes in order to, under these trying conditions, make things easier for myself. Then, I reminded Hoang to say good-bye to the host. The entire meeting with Deng lasted only four or five minutes. We were kept standing there all the time, without being offered tea or cigarettes although there were a table, chairs, teacups and cigarettes there.

It had been nearly two years since we had begun to make contact in Guilin with the Chinese Kuomintang towards the end of 1940. I discovered that they had been using two major tactics: openly delivering blows at us through Yang Jirong on the one hand and trying to appease and buy us through Chen Baocang on the other. However, these tactics resulted only in their becoming the butt of many jokes for future generations. Whatever their tactics, I went on with my preparations to escape back to Viet Nam at the first possible opportunity.

In early August 1942, the Command Post organized a large-scale sports meet. The participants included troops stationed there and people from local government offices. The

sports meet lasted five days and included track and field, volleyball, basketball, fencing, horse race and other events. The local people were very excited about going to it; it was just like going to a fair for them. People from all the departments and units under Chen Baocang's Command Post were kept busy, devoting almost all their time to the sports meet.

On the fourth day, when the meet was coming close to an end, the spectators increased in number and staff members became busier. Taking advantage of this opportunity, after breakfast I walked at a leisurely pace out of the city and straight towards the border. When I was some four kilometres from the county seat of Jingxi, I turned around to make sure that nobody was following me. I hid myself at once behind a grove, taking off my woolen uniform and putting on some student clothing. Then I went into a nearby village and bought a pair of straw sandals and a large bamboo hat, dressing myself like a student going to school.

The distance between Jingxi and Pac Bo is about 60 kilometres, and it generally takes two days to travel the distance on foot. The local people at Ronglao and Gema, two rest-stops along the way, were sympathetic to the revolutionary movement and would give me shelter. My only worry was that at Geshen something might happen. Fortunately, nothing did happen there, and I quickened my pace. But when I was a few kilometres to Geshen I got caught in a downpour and was drenched to the skin. However, there was nothing to worry about now; I was no longer afraid of being pursued.

I arrived at Gema at dusk. The head and deputy head of the village were both sympathetic to the Vietnamese revolution. I went straight to the house of the head of the village which was on the outskirts of the village, instead of the deputy head's house, which was on the main street. Outside the house that was made of bamboo, I thought I heard his voice. But when I went in, his younger brother told me that he was not at home. I said that I would go and see the deputy head. In fact, I started to walk away from the village. I rounded a mountain slope which was four or five hundred metres long and continued walking for a while before reaching a plot of

maize growing on a rugged, rocky hill. It was already dark and I was very hungry. I plucked some tender ears of maize, removed their peels and chewed them down like a horse. Then I found a place to spend the night close behind the hill. I rose at dawn and continued my journey. After climbing over several rocky hills, I arrived at Bowan on the Chinese side of the boundary marker delimiting the Sino-Vietnamese border and entered a villager's house. The owner of the house was warming wine just then. Seeing my drenched and muddy clothes, he gathered that something unexpected must have happened to me the night before. He offered me a few words of sympathy and a big bowlful of warm wine. I asked him about the things in Pac Bo while I drank the wine. I looked down and suddenly saw Le Quang Ba passing by. I was so overjoyed at seeing him that I put down the wine bowl, ran downstairs and grabbed hold of him. He smiled and pointed in the direction from which he had just come: "Grandpa is just behind me!" Thereupon I saw President Ho coming up the mountain slope. He said to me, "You must have had some difficulties; otherwise you wouldn't have come back here, right? I have something to attend to now. Would you go to Dai Hoa's home?" He said good-bye and went ahead. I went back into the bamboo house, finished the wine, dried my clothes by the fire and scrubbed off the mud. Then I set out and crossed the border and got to Dai Hoa's in Pac Bo after covering a long hill slope.

Part Four

YEARS BEFORE AND AFTER THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

(1942-1948)

After 14 years of revolutionary activities abroad (from 1928 to 1935 in Thailand and from 1935 to 1942 in China), I finally got an opportunity to participate in revolutionary activities at home, including the liberation of many areas in Viet Bac.

I knew the Thai language, which was of great benefit to our work in Viet Bac. Thai could be understood by the Nong and Dai nationalities residing in provinces of Viet Bac which bordered on China. From 1940 to 1941, when I worked in Jingxi and Longzhou, both in China, as secretary of the Overseas Vietnamese Party branch, I often returned to Viet Nam to report on the status of our work in those two places. I met with President Ho each time, in a cave at Pac Bo, in Lung Lam and in Khuoi Nam, and sometimes I would stay with him for a couple of weeks. This time, however, during my stay in Viet Bac for more than a year, I never saw him, for he had been kept busy in other places. Nonetheless, I came to have a better understanding of his political line in building liberated areas and of the methods he used to educate cadres and train the masses.

Included in Part Four are the following sections:

I. Expanding and Consolidating the Viet Minh in Cao Bang.

II. Marching Down South to Lang Son.

III. President Ho's Arrest in China and His Activities There.

IV. President Ho's Meeting with the Commander of the U.S. Air Force in Kunming.

V. The Party's National Conference and the National Assembly Held in Tan Trao.

VI. Years After the August Revolution.

I. Expanding and Consolidating the Viet Minh in Cao Bang

In accordance with the advice that President Ho gave me in Bowan, I stayed at Dai Hoa's place he had frequented, waiting for the Cao Bang Provincial Party Committee in Nhuong Ban of Hoa An Prefecture to contact me.

The next day around noon while I was resting, the head of Gema Village came.

He asked me, "Was it you who came to my place yesterday afternoon?" I asked him in return, "Since you knew it was me, why did you avoid me? I heard your voice when I was going by your bamboo house. But when I went upstairs, your brother told me you were not in."

He explained immediately, "You often speak mandarin, but this time you spoke Cantonese. I mistook you for a member of the Kuomintang who had come to make an arrest, so I hid myself in another room with a loaded gun. I thought if you were going to arrest me, I would kill you and then set my house on fire and run to Viet Nam. I asked my brother to raise the lamp so that I could see your face clearly, but you turned around. When I heard that you were going to see the deputy head of the village, I guessed it must be you. I sent my brother to go and make sure, but he didn't see you there. I became suspicious again. I had my brother and two other people go to the edge of the village, each holding a gun, and told them that

if it were Ly Quang Hoa, they should bring him home so that he wouldn't have to spend the night in open air, and if not, to force him back for close questioning."

I said, "Oh, I see. Yesterday when I left your place, it was already dark. To divert your brother's attention, I told him that I was going to see the deputy head of the village. Actually, I went out of the village and down a long hill slope leading towards Viet Nam. It was already pitch-dark when I reached a corn field. The mountain path was so rugged that I had to stay overnight under a cliff. At daybreak I made it over the mountain and got to Bowan and then back here after crossing the border."

He asked me, "Why did you choose to suffer such inconvenience?" I replied, "When I was in Jingxi, Chen Baocang tried to force me to work for the Kuomintang in China. I refused and had to come back to Viet Nam. If I stayed overnight at your place and something happened when you were away, that would be the end of me. So I had to hurry to other places."

He said apologizing, "I am very sorry to have made you suffer so much. But now I am very glad that you have returned safe and sound."

Then he wanted to leave. I asked him to stay a little longer, and in the meantime I wrote a letter to Chen Baocang, asking him to tell Zhang Fakui, Commander of the Fourth War Zone of the Kuomintang in Liuzhou, that I had returned to Viet Nam not because I was deserting the army, but because there were things here that I needed to do. Enclosed with the letter was a poem I had written in Chinese. It went like this:

When evil forces hold sway,
Inactive can good people remain.
Taking an arching branch for a bow,
The startled Viet bird builds a nest on a branch in the south.
The fold can still be mended even though the sheep have been stolen,

And who knows if a missing horse won't bring you good fortune?
A precious sword can't be buried for ever,
For the time will come for it to glitter.

I sealed the letter and asked him to take it to Gema and there mail it to Chen Baocang.

While waiting for work to be assigned me by the Cao Bang Provincial Party Committee, I stayed at Dai Hoa's, helping local comrades with their work in Luc Khu of Soc Giang. Dai Hoa's elder brother Dai Lam was responsible for work in the Luc Khu area. Whenever I gave a talk to the local people or lectured on problems of the revolution, he would serve as my interpreter.

During my stay in Pac Bo, Dai Lam often took me to visit people or to attend the weddings of local cadres. Sometimes, I joined the boys there to sing in antiphonal style with the girls. Similar to the "love songs" in Nghe Tinh area and the musical dialogues in North Viet Nam, this form of singing was known as "Lien Dai" among the Nung people. It was the men who started the singing at the entrance of a village or near the homes of girls. If a girl was satisfied with the man's singing and answers, she would invite him to her house. Otherwise, the man would be regarded as a loser and had to either prepare for a new dialogue or just give up.

After I had been together with the local cadres and other people for a period of time, I could understand a lot of the Dai language and sometimes I would compose simple songs in the language. Below is one of them, "the World Situation".

On the globe there are five continents.
There are many countries in each of them.
Britain, France, Germany and Italy are in Europe.
Viet Nam, Japan and China are in Asia.
.....

One day I learned from comrades who had gone down to work at the grass-roots level that branches of the Viet Minh

had been set up in almost all the villages in this area, except one where a few reactionary, despotic members of the gentry threatened to seize any Viet Minh person who came into the village and turn him in to the French or Japanese for a reward, so the cadres dared not enter the village. But this village was strategically located in terms of communication. If no organization was set up there, our work in the entire area would be hindered. We discussed the matter and decided to send a few young men with good singing voices to that village to sing to the girls there. If they were invited into the girls' homes, they could turn these homes into their footholds, work among the young people there and gradually win over the older folks. Moreover, through the local youth we could make those reactionary, despotic people realize that the Viet Minh was fighting against France and Japan to save the country and the people, that the organization had had its branches in all prefectures and counties, that it had powerful armed forces, and that anyone opposing it would most certainly come to no good end. We consulted with Nham about the matter. Nham was an excellent singer. Wherever he sang, he would receive a warm welcome from the village girls, some of whom even sent him shoes to express their admiration for him. Nham agreed to our idea and believed there was nothing dangerous about it. As expected, he succeeded only after a few times of singing and some village girls already invited to their homes Nham and those young men who had sung together with him. Thanks to Nham's efforts over a period of time, all the villagers eventually became Viet Minh sympathizers. Nevertheless, each time when Viet Minh cadres entered the village, persons with a higher degree of political awareness would be dispatched to keep an eye on the few reactionaries in that village.

After working for a period of time in Luc Khu, I went to Hoa An county to see Comrade Bac Vong, Secretary of the Cao Bang Provincial Party Committee, and Vu Anh, newly elected member of the Party Central Committee at the Eighth Plenary Session, whom I had worked with before in Siam. They told

me that President Ho thought it vitally important to begin to move southward. Over the past year and more Vo Nguyen Giap had been busy trying to establish connection between Bac Can and Thai Nguyen; there was nobody doing anything about the Lang Son-Thai Nguyen sector. The Provincial Party Committee wanted me to be in charge of work for that sector. I accepted the assignment and suggested that the Committee provide me with a few cadres with firm political convictions who were familiar with the terrain and could adapt themselves to changing conditions. The Committee agreed. As it would take quite some time to get such cadres, I started to help improve the work of the Viet Minh there.

A few days later, I was sent to Dao Ngan to start a class for training local cadres. Comrade Hai Khoat was in charge of the class while serving as my interpreter, as Dai Lam had done for me in Luc Khu. Dao Ngan was a place where almost all the villagers were organized and were Viet Minh sympathizers. The training class, which lasted for a period of about ten days for each group of trainees, aimed at disseminating knowledge about the revolution and about methods of work. There were 10 to 20 students for each group, most of whom were young, with occasionally a forty- or fifty-year old or a teenager. All of them were illiterate.

The training method was simple. I asked a few questions for the students to answer. If they failed, I would try to explain the answers to them in language that they could easily understand. Then I asked them to repeat two or three times the answers I gave. I would not finish a lesson until everyone could answer the questions. Being illiterate, the students did not have to read textbooks or take any notes. Even if a couple of them could write, I did not require them to take notes because I wanted to make sure that the contents of the course did not slip into wrong people's hands. The question-and-answer method I employed was as follows:

Concerning propaganda, I would ask, "What does propaganda mean?" The answer was, "It means arousing the people's hatred for the French and the Japanese and their enthusiasm

for joining with us in revolution."

Concerning organizational work, the question was, "What does organizational work mean?" The answer was, "It means mobilizing the people to join the Viet Minh, youth groups, or women's organizations."

In order to test the students' political understanding, we asked, "Are provincial governors, prefectural officials, county officials and magistrates capable?" The students in general answered this question in the affirmative. Then I would tell them that these officials were very foolish because they took for their parents the French and the Japanese who had occupied our territory. It was we who were really capable because we knew how to unite the people in an effort to fight against the French and Japanese aggressors and to save our country.

Concerning guerrilla forces, the question was, "Why are our guerrilla forces able to defeat the French and Japanese troops?" The answer was, "This is because our guerrilla forces know how to deal with and out-manoeuvre an enemy that is stronger than we. Our tactics are: The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy retreats, we pursue; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack."

Lastly, concerning confidentiality, we asked them, "What is meant by keeping secrets?" The answer we gave was, "It means that when you are asked about revolutionary activities, you should answer 'I haven't heard or seen anything about it' and 'I don't know anything'. In this way the enemy, 'blind and deaf', will be kept to groping in the dark."

We also made other demands of the students. In their everyday lives, we asked them to live in harmony with their families, to be on good terms with their neighbours, to be loyal to their fellow comrades, and vigilant against the enemy.

Although the contents of training were very simple, we obtained very good results. All who received training later became cadres doing practical work. They won over not only their parents, brothers and sisters, but also other villagers.

I learned these simple training techniques from President Ho when I was in Siam before as well as recently when I

travelled between Jingxi and Cao Bang and when I was in Pac Bo, Lung Lam and Khuoi Nam.

And then I returned to Nhuong Ban and made preparations to go southward with some other cadres in order to establish connection between Lang Son and Thai Nguyen. But the Provincial Party Committee didn't send me the cadres I needed, so I had to stay behind and help strengthen and carry out the work of the Viet Minh.

To work for the revolution was our sacred duty. Then why did I say "help"? This is because President Ho held that cadres from the plains who worked in areas inhabited by minority nationalities should not participate in the collective leadership there. In this way, local cadres would not become dependent and unable to make decisions on their own. So I worked with them only in the capacity of an adviser, respecting the decisions made by the local comrades. Cadres who had returned to Cao Bang in 1940 and 1941, such as Pham Van Dong, Cao Hong Lanh and Le Thiet Hung, all worked in the capacity of advisers. This was a very wise decision made by President Ho with the intention of keeping the cadres from the plains, who generally had a more sophisticated political understanding and a better education, from monopolizing everything, as well as of promoting self-confidence and self-determination on the part of minority nationality cadres.

Although many people in Nhuong Ban understood Vietnamese, I would often insisted that Comrade Bac Vong, Secretary of the Cao Bang Provincial Party Committee, go there with me because he was familiar with the local conditions and could be my interpreter when necessary.

During my stay in Nhuong Ban I lived at Uncle Len's home, which was also where the Cao Bang provincial newspaper was published and distributed. It was located near the ancient Mac dynasty city of Lung Voai. But most of the time I had to live in mountain caves, because the French troops were often scouting around. The local cadres would send me rice and salt and I would cook myself. I wrote a poem entitled

"Wonderland" describing my life in the mountains at that time. It reads in part as follows:

The high mountains are piercing through the clouds,
With bushes growing among jagged rocks of grotesque shapes.
The place is unfrequented by people all the year round,
With only the unending noise made by animals and birds all day long.
It is hard to describe the desolate scene,
And nobody could be here without feeling at sea.
Yet step by step if you scale the heights,
Broader and broader will become the earth and the sky.
Where there are mountain peaks towering,
There is a wonderland with flowers blooming.
.....

A few months later, the Provincial Party Committee assigned Hoang and Nam (both of whom died a few years ago) to go with me to the Xuan Son district of Cao Bang in order to establish a liaison network with the Trang Dinh Prefecture in Lang Son. On our way to Xuan Son we had to pass through De Tham Village, whose inhabitants were sympathetic to the Viet Minh. For this reason, the French forced the villagers to build a bamboo fence around the perimeter of the village and had them close the gate when it got dark. To make things convenient for cadres to enter the village to update themselves on the village situation or to look for guides, the comrades in the village installed a movable post in the fence, which served as an entrance.

Before our departure Comrade Bac Vong came especially to remind us to take care of ourselves. According to him, people from other places had gotten malaria after staying in Xuan Son for only three or four days. But I didn't quite believe what he said. Alas, three days later, I actually got the disease. It was a fairly virulent form of malaria often found in jungle areas. The patient has bad chills and shivers even if he covers

himself with as many as three or four quilts. But once the chills are gone, the patient feels all right and his appetite returns.

All the time I was in Xuan Son, I stayed with an old villager in Rong Bo. He had four children. The eldest one, Kim Ha, was not openly involved in political activities; the second one, Phong Cuc, was a widow; the third one, Kim Khanh, was married and the youngest one, Kim Boi, was still young. All his children were backbone activists. Through the vigorous efforts of local comrades, the Viet Minh experienced rapid growth. After staying in Xuan Son for two or three weeks, I returned to Nhuong Ban and stayed with the Provincial Party Committee for a couple of days in order to update myself on the situation there, exchange views with other comrades and obtain some anti-malaria medicine, which was contributed by the masses. In order not to attract the attention of the French, the medicine had to be bought in small quantities each time. Quinine was the medicine most frequently used in curing malaria. Each time I could get hold of, at most, only a few dozen tablets. So we had to economize on the use of them.

In early 1944 the Provincial Party Committee sent more cadres here. Comrade Dam Minh Vien (his alias was Ky Su) was one of them. He was very capable and full of revolutionary drive. Thanks to his efforts, our work to spread the influence of the Viet Minh southwards proceeded quickly and successfully. Within a short period of time, the Viet Minh organization was not only strengthened in Xuan Son but also had new branches set up in Thach An Prefecture and in such places as Boc Thuong, Na Ngoa, Na Doong, Na Ke, Na Mu, Na Con and Nam Tan under the jurisdiction of Cao Mon and Bac Khe that were bordering on Lang Son. In these places we started about 10 training classes, each with 10 to 20 students. The length of each training session was about 10 days. The methods employed were the same as the ones we used in Dao Ngan and Nhuong Ban.

The musical dialogue sung by people in Thach An Prefecture was called "Lien Tuong". Like poetry in China's Tang Dynasty, each dialogue was composed of four lines, three of

which were rhymed. The "Lien Tuong" verses were perhaps written in the early days by Confucian scholars in the Dai language in accordance with the rules of Tang poetry; they later became very popular among the people. For the purposes of revolutionary education, I tried hard to write a few "Lien Tuong" songs in the Dai language and to teach them to the young people, though I myself was not good at singing dialogues. "About the Country in the South" was one of the verses I wrote during that period, which is included in my *Selected Poems* anthology.

In late 1943 and early 1944 the French imperialists intensified their efforts to suppress the revolution. Consequently, sometimes during my stay in Xuan Son, I had to live in a straw shed on the hillside near Comrade Kim Khanh's home. The local comrades would regularly send me rice and salt and brief me on local conditions. Occasionally, I would go to the village and worked among the people. After I returned to Nhuong Ban I continued to live in caves. And most of the cadres from Cao Bang Province had to move up into the mountains where they lived in sheds they had made themselves. When their numbers became apparent to the French, the latter, thoroughly irate, would instruct the Governor of Cao Bang to issue orders to the heads of villages and townships to persuade these cadres to turn themselves in. One of the cadres who was not vigilant enough suggested that the cadres turn themselves in "for the benefit of the revolutionary work". To oppose this bad tendency, I published two poems entitled, "The Crafty Government Officials" and "Against Persecution" in *Viet Lap* (*Independence of Viet Nam*).

The following are extracts from "The Crafty Government Officials":

Being revolutionaries to save the nation,
We should be loyal and devoted to the cause.
Now that government officials have set a trap,
We should not allow ourselves to fall into it.

The following are excerpts from "Against Persecution":

Driven to the corner,
Rabid dogs are barking furiously.
Being at the end of their ropes,
The Japanese and French imperialists are resorting to violence.

.....

We must be resolved
To launch a counter-attack.
Japan and France
Are not that strong,
We can certainly defeat them.

II. Marching Down South to Lang Son

Despite intensified suppression of the revolutionary forces by the Japanese and French imperialists, we were determined to carry out our strategic mission of marching down south to Lang Son. We had to drop our plan to move to Cao Mon and Bac Khe first because something unexpected had happened. One day, two of our comrades were bathing in a river near Cao Mon, leaving their rifles and clothes on the bank. The security police on duty caught sight of them from afar and reported to their chief, a certain The, who ordered his men to be on the look-out day and night in the border area between Cao Bang and Lang Son.

In May 1944 I returned to Nhuong Ban, where I picked up a copy of the Guangxi Daily which Chen Baocang had sent along. In this particular issue there was a poem written by President Ho in Chinese. Along with the newspaper, Chen had someone pass on a message to me, the gist of which was that President Ho had regained his freedom. The poem of Ho's reads as follows:

The mountains are in the arms of the clouds,
And the clouds are embracing the mountains.
The river is as clear as a crystal mirror,

Without being soiled by a speck of dust.
Alone I am wandering in the Xifeng Mountains,
Gazing at the southern sky
And thinking of my old friends there.

Although I knew from Chen's message that President Ho was free again, I perused the poem. The first two lines meant that the struggle was very complicated; the third and fourth lines were a metaphor for the revolutionary cause, which was like a river current—bright, clear and turbulent; the fifth means that he had regained his freedom; and the last two referred to his desire to return home. I told Comrades Bac Vong and Vu Anh about my understanding of this poem. Then I got a few dozens of tablets of quinine for use on my way to Lang Son. We decided not to go via Cao Mon but to get to Trang Dinh through Keo Qui. This was a very difficult route: we would have to climb over mountains and wade across rivers. Moreover, we would have to go through several villages, including Na Meng and Na Cao, and would be harassed by sworn-followers of the French. However, we managed to surmount all obstacles. We reached Ta Lua first and then headed directly for That Khe where Comrade Hoang Van Thu had once engaged in revolutionary activities and had won a mass following.

In That Khe we often stayed at Comrade Hoang Minh Xuong's place in the village of Chang and Comrade Tran Duc Hinh's place in Toong Cot. We set about consolidating work in the area before moving to surrounding areas. We had the generous assistance of many local comrades whom we had known through the years, including Nhu Y, Lam and Khai Lac who had studied in the dynamiters training class in Jingxi, Be Ha Kinh, whom we had met at the inaugural meeting of the Liberation League in Jingxi in 1941, and Be Chan Hung and Hoang Van Kieu whom we had known in Longzhou. They all had a good grasp of the political line of the Viet Minh and were familiar with local conditions.

In recent years the Lang Son area had been the victim of

White terror. However, thanks to the resourcefulness of our comrades, we had had a strong mass following there, and work had greatly expanded. These comrades had gained a firm foothold in Na Nhan, Na Voai and Na Ca in Cao Bang and in Na Cao, Bac Xiec, Ta Lua in Lang Son. Thus we could press ahead to That Khe without any obstacle.

Viet Minh branches were not set up in all the above-mentioned places. It was only at night that we could pass through Keo Qui, which was located in a densely forested mountainous region. The villages there were criss-crossed with streams. Torches had to be used at night. But we dared not use them; instead, we wrapped some fireflies in handkerchiefs, each of us with such a handkerchief hanging at the back of his neck so that the one behind could follow the light. When we got to difficult sections of the road, our guide would have to give us a helping hand. When plodding along most rugged paths, a person in front would not move forward until the person behind him had gotten a firm foothold.

In the Cao Mon region Comrades Duong Van Thuc and Tran Van Liem had under their control Khau Chong, Khuoi Nhao, Khuoi Hai Tau, Khuoi Tho, Khuoi Chan and Khuoi Phay, while Toan and other comrades set up grass-roots mass organizations in other places.

It was not long before we won over some Vietnamese squad and team leaders in the French army in the stronghold of That Khe, namely, Dai from Cao Bang and An from Nghe An, both of whom maintained close ties with us. We talked with them about the revolutionary situation and invited them to have dinner at Comrade Tran Duc Hinh's. And we safely visited their homes.

An and Dai suggested that we launch a surprise attack on the French stronghold at That Khe at night. They would plant their own people at the entrance of the stronghold and at strategically important parts, go along with us to capture the stronghold's commanders and then order the soldiers to carry the weapons and ammunition to our base areas. According to them, almost all Vietnamese soldiers at the stronghold wanted

to follow the Viet Minh and were ready to take the stronghold together with them.

The plan seemed very simple. But before putting it into effect we had to carefully consider all possible contingencies. First of all, we had to send Dam Minh Vien back to Cao Bang to get more good-quality bullets. The other night when we had opened fire against some French security soldiers, we found that our bullets were no good. Also, I had to go to Longzhou and Buju in China to contact the people there so that we could speedily withdraw to these places in case, after we had taken the stronghold, the French forces moved swiftly to retaliate. In 1940 when he failed in the Pac Son Uprising, Chu Van Tan led his troops to take cover in Buju. In 1941, when I was making preparations to set up an office for the Viet Minh in Longzhou, I often went there to get in touch with the local people and with comrades from Viet Nam. The people in Buju had a high political awareness and they regarded supporting the Vietnamese revolution as their own solemn duty. When I told them that we were planning to take the stronghold of That Khe, they promptly declared that they would have no difficulty providing food or other necessities for a hundred people, in case the Vietnamese side needed help.

Even with the backing of the people in Buju, I did not think that the subjective or objective conditions for taking That Khe were ripe. I wanted to go to Jingxi to re-establish contact with Chen Baocang and also to find out the whereabouts of President Ho. So I had a telegram sent from the Longzhou telegraph office to Zhang Fakui, the gist of which was that I wished to go to Jingxi to see Director Chen Baocang with his approval.

Two days later he cabled an affirmative reply to me. With this cable as a pass, I planned to go from Buju to Jingxi by way of Longzhou, Kejia, Baoxu, Shuolong, Xialei and Huadong, and then back to Pac Bo by way of Yanglou and Gema. This was a longer route than was probably necessary but was a comparatively safer one. Moreover, I could take this opportunity to revisit Jingxi which I had known so well in the past. (I

had left Jingxi for Viet Nam in August 1942).

In early July 1944 I left for Jingxi, At the Command Post, Chen Baocang was very hospitable, having a cordial talk with me and giving a grand banquet in my honour. At the banquet Chen asked me many questions about French and Japanese involvement in Viet Nam and also about the progress of the Vietnamese revolution. I told him that Viet Nam was actually controlled by Japan, not by France, and that although the French were opposed to the Japanese, they were unscrupulously suppressing Vietnamese anti-Japanese forces. I explained to him, for the above reason, we were in favour of opposing both France and Japan. I also told him that many revolutionary organizations had sprouted up and these organizations were carrying out their activities in many places.

Then the topic of our conversation switched to that poem of President Ho's. Chen asked me whether I had read that poem published in Guangxi Daily he had mailed to us. I told him I had and also the poem he had written in response to Ho's. I showed him one of my poems and asked him to forward it to Comrade Ho, who was in Liuzhou. It reads as follows:

The blue sky hasn't yet been cleared of dark clouds,
And it is hard to free the Milky Way of dust.
As like always attracts like,
Sharing one mind, fair friend,
I saw you in many a dream.

The last line was an indirect way of saying that I longed for President Ho's advice and for Chen Baocang's help. The words "Sharing one mind" was borrowed from an ancient Chinese classic which goes, "the strength of two persons of one mind is great enough to tear gold asunder". Chen praised my poem very highly and asked me to write it down. He told me that Comrade Ho had regained complete freedom and would probably return to Viet Nam soon.

I benefited a lot from this meeting with Chen.

I set out the next day and stayed overnight at Yanglou. Then I left for Pac Bo, where I would stay at Dai Hoa's for a

few days before going to Nhuong Ban.

White terror reigned in Cao Bang. I no longer stayed at Uncle Len's but in a thatched shack situated on a rocky hill. Occasionally I would go to the village to engage in revolutionary activities. Before long I met Vu Anh, from whom I learned that President Ho had returned to Viet Nam and criticized the proposal for launching guerrilla warfare, which had been raised at the conference of cadres of Cao Bang, Bac Can and Lang Son provinces.

It was in May 1944 when I returned to Lam Son trying to get in touch with Cao Bang Provincial Party Committee that I met Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap and Vu Anh. Vo Nguyen Giap had drafted a document in the form of an action programme and submitted it to the Provincial Committee for review. In this document he set forth his specific ideas on fighting a guerrilla war and on organizing guerrilla forces in Cao Bang, Boc Can and Lang Son. I believed that his proposal to immediately launch a guerrilla war was a mistaken one because two conditions did not exist. First, we had not been sufficiently informed of what was going on in other countries (with President Ho being detained in China, we were unable to keep abreast of international developments). Second, good communications between the northern, central and southern parts of Viet Nam were lacking. If we launched a guerrilla war, we were bound to meet with numerous difficulties and in the end would find ourselves isolated. But I did not object that we should start organizing and training guerrilla forces where possible, so that we could avail ourselves of these forces when necessary in future.

But Vo Nguyen Giap disagreed with me, saying that organizing guerrilla forces and launching guerrilla war were inseparable and that if one agreed to the former, one would have to agree to the latter. Pham Van Dong shared Vo's views. Sticking to my views, I tried hard to convince them but to no avail. I had to suggest that Vu Anh explain my position on this matter before the Provincial Party Committee.

In July 1944 the Conference of Cadres of Cao Bang, Bac.

Can and Lang Son provinces was held. (I didn't attend it because I was in Lang Son.) Later I was told there was a heated discussion on the question of whether or not to launch a guerrilla war. Vu Anh thought that conditions were not yet ripe for such an action while many other comrades were undecided. Finally, the Conference decided to put the question aside for review at a later date. (According to some sources, it does not tally with the facts to say that the Conference approved the launching of a guerrilla war.)

At the Conference, the question of whether or not to organize a liberation army was also raised, but no consensus was reached. In spite of this, Vo Nguyen Giap started to organize such an army. In his capacity as member of the Central Committee, Vu Anh announced that any such group should be disbanded.

At the time when neither side was ready to yield, President Ho returned from China. He gave his views on the two questions:

1. It was not right to propose to immediately launch a guerrilla war under the prevailing conditions, because we would come up against many insurmountable difficulties. From the military point of view, we didn't have a strong armed force and were short of cadres and weapons.

2. The time was not ripe yet for calling ourselves a "liberation army". We could, however, use the name "Vietnamese Liberation Army Propaganda Team", an armed propaganda team engaged more in political activities than in military operations. At the same time, he didn't think Vu Anh had been prudent enough in disbanding the liberation army.

I felt both relieved and excited. I was convinced that, with President Ho at the helm, there was nothing for me to worry about. The important thing was that I should try my best to do my work well.

Cao Bang remained under cruel repression by the enemy. The people in Dong Khe, where branches of the Viet Minh had just recently set up, were panic-stricken. Around 10 o'clock one

evening, Hoang, Nam and myself decided to visit a villager, who first told us that there was a stranger in his home and asked us to hide ourselves in his straw shed outside the village until the stranger left. We knew it was a pretext to turn us away. We told the villager we would interrogate this stranger on behalf of the township head. But the villager politely declined our offer, asking us to stay in his bamboo room, which was above the cowshed. He promised to call us down when the stranger left at dawn. The following day we went to another villager's house near Nam Tan and were warmly received. This villager told us that there was a wizard in the village who had advised the villagers to keep us away from the village. We asked him to invite the wizard for a talk. Our talk helped dispel the worries of the wizard as well as of the villager. The wizard even invited us to stay in his home. After we had explained to everyone our strategy for dealing with the enemy, the villagers who had just recently joined in the Viet Minh felt relieved. Not long after, we carried out our work in numerous villages in Na Coc and Khuoi Hoong and started three training classes. In this way, we trained a number of new local cadres.

At the time when we were consolidating our work in Dong Khe, the Japanese seized power in Viet Nam from the French (on March 9, 1945). All the administrative organs of the French in Viet Nam collapsed. Except for a few township and village heads and security corps people who blindly went on to oppose the Viet Minh, the rest supported it, or, at least, turned a blind eye to its activities. We made use of this opportunity to carry out more activities. Carrying weapons, we visited villages in the daytime, holding mass rallies to build up revolutionary momentum and puncture the arrogance of the few people who still obstinately opposed us.

After we had completed our work in Dong Khe, we went to Xuan Son where we held several mass rallies comparable in scale to those in Dong Khe. On our way back to Nhuong Ban, to meet with Comrade Bac Vong, we bumped into President Ho who had come down from Pac Bo. Our paths crossed for one day. On the way President Ho had a malaria attack.

Comrade Pham Viet Tu gave him an intravenous injection of quinine, which he said was the quickest possible way to bring the attack under control. Being ignorant of medicine, we accepted what he said. (Later in 1946 I had a malaria attack when I was working in our Fourth Joint Defence Zone. No sooner had the nurse also given me an intravenous injection of quinine than I fell in a faint. Thanks to the hot compress applied by the comrades, I regained consciousness after a long while. A doctor later told me that such injection was extremely dangerous.) But nothing happened to President Ho this time, which was indeed fortunate for him and the whole nation.

We parted company after one day of travelling together, he heading for Tuyen Quang and we for Dong Khe and then Lang Son.

Going to Lang Son this time, I took several newly arrived cadres. Phan Boi was the transmitter-receiver operator in charge of maintaining contact with the Central Committee. Among the male comrades were Dam Minh Vien, Hoang Dien, Quoc Toan, Bao An, Duc Vinh, Tan Cuong and Tuan Son; the female comrades included Nguyet Nga (Van), Vu Bao, Yen, Thuan, Ngoc and Bich. They helped strengthen our work in Trang Dinh.

The power having been wrested from them by the Japanese, the French army collapsed. But this didn't necessarily mean that all was smooth sailing for us in Trang Dinh. In some places there were still diehard reactionaries who were intransigent in their hostility towards the revolution and kept the places heavily guarded. In time we forced the village head of Na Cao to turn in his arms and then killed him. Then we sent a letter to the deputy head of Lung Bo ordering him to hand over five rifles. After that, we sent our soldiers to arrest Khen, the deputy head of Binh Quan, who had killed Teacher Loi and presented Loi's head to the French in return for a few dozen catties of salt and had been bent on opposing the Viet Minh. After we had taken these actions, the reactionary forces restrained themselves to some extent, and having no more misgiv-

ings, the masses actively supported the Viet Minh.

Taking advantage of the situation where the French had fallen from power and the Japanese had not yet been able to establish order in Viet Nam, a number of Chinese bandits crossed the border to harass the people, plundering draught animals and taking women away with them. Naturally, the local people were beset with fear, not sure whether the Viet Minh could protect them. To reassure them, we organized people to fight the bandits. After we had dealt them a few decisive blows, they dared not harass the people any more, which increased the people's confidence. From then on the security corps in many prefectures and counties, townships and villages began to accept the leadership of the Viet Minh.

After we had captured an enemy stronghold in Po Ma, we executed the chieftain of the security corps there, planted the banner of the Viet Minh and disarmed the corps. At the same time, we declared that soldiers who were willing to join the ranks of the Viet Minh would be welcome and those who wanted to go home would get protection and financial assistance. These actions on our part won the admiration of the masses. But at this time the comrades in charge of military operations were so intoxicated with their victory that they had the troops stay idle in the stronghold for several days. Fortunately, they realized their mistake in time and withdrew their men to different places nearby to do propaganda and organizational work among the masses, leaving only the banner of the Viet Minh planted at the stronghold. In addition, we decided that if the Japanese troops entered the stronghold, we would not fight them because only in this way would we save the masses from wholesale slaughter by the enemy. And, only in this way, could we preserve our military strength for a large-scale counter-offensive in future. As expected, the Japanese troops did come to Po Ma. But when they found the stronghold empty, they thought that the Viet Minh was employing the "empty-city stratagem" that Zhuge Liang in ancient times in China had. So they withdrew to That Khe after surveying the stronghold from all sides.

Since then, the security corps in various prefectures and villages expressed willingness to accept the leadership of the Viet Minh. At first, we didn't require them to hand their guns over to us because we were not great in numbers and had no need for so many guns. However, we reached an agreement with them that we could use their guns when we needed them.

One shocking incident took place about this time in Kim Dong Village, where one of our cadres abused his power, forcing the masses to contribute money and openly coerced a woman, who already had a boy friend, to live with him, thus producing a very bad influence among the masses. So, one day we went to the village with a platoon of soldiers and called a mass meeting in a forest to explain our policies. When the degenerate cadre came up the rostrum to report on his work, the presidium ordered his arrest and took away his gun. We found several thousand dong on him. The masses told us that this was the money that he had forced them to contribute. We returned the money to the masses and executed the cadre on the spot. This incident caused a sensation in various places, and the ruling organs established by the French in this region collapsed. The Viet Minh came to control the entire region. Whenever people had difficulties or disputes, they would approach the Viet Minh for help. The Viet Minh organization had actually become local revolutionary government. Many township and village heads handed over their seals and local armed groups and the security corps surrendered their guns to the Viet Minh. The armed forces of the Viet Minh could openly carry out activities during daytime. Wherever they went, the reactionary chieftains either took to their heels or surrendered. The people began to live in safety and they organized themselves into study groups.

We won victory not only in Trang Dinh but also in other places. The troops led by Comrade Chu Van Tan succeeded in fighting their way from Bac Son to Tan Trao, and Khai Lac, Be Chan Hung, Hoang Van Kieu and other comrades captured the strongholds at Na Sam, Dong Dang, Van Mich, Binh Gia and Diem He. As a result, a vast stretch of area came under

our control. The enemies in the strongholds at Dong Khe and Pac Booc in Cao Bang surrendered to the Viet Minh. In the end, the sector between Cao Bang and Lang Son was ours. The armed work teams from Cao Bang moved to Lang Son and worked in close co-ordination with the local armed forces. The French officers and officials in these prefectures and counties fled and village security corps and puppet troops surrendered to the Viet Minh.

President Ho was arrested in China in August 1942 and returned to Viet Nam to assume direct leadership of the revolutionary movement in September 1944. However, the comrades working in Viet Bac and I myself owed our success scored in our work during this period to the fact that we had implemented the correct political line and principles that he had set forth for us and applied the flexible working methods he had long advocated.

III. President Ho's Arrest in China and His Activities There

President Ho's decision to go to Chongqing, China, to meet Chiang Kai-shek was an important strategic move. Very few people knew about it and those who did refrained from discussing it for one reason or another. Some people believed that he was going to Chongqing to make contact with the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, not to meet Chiang Kai-shek. But these people did not see that the Vietnamese revolution required international recognition. To be specific, they failed to see that the Vietnamese revolution needed to establish definite relations with China, one of the anti-fascist allies, whose vast territory was under Japanese occupation and who was waging a war of resistance and preparing to dispatch its troops to Viet Nam.

No one ever expected that President Ho would be arrested on his way to China and imprisoned for more than a year. But with his correct political attitude and resourcefulness, he won

the sympathy of Zhang Fakui and Xiao Wen in Liuzhou, China, was elected member of the Executive Committee of the Vietnamese Revolutionary League and thus attained complete freedom of action. This facilitated his return later to Viet Nam to lead the August Revolution and made it possible for the Viet Minh to defeat the Vietnamese Nationalist Party and the Vietnamese Revolutionary League.

I'm going to dwell on what I have just mentioned in the following three sections:

1. President Ho's Arrest and Our Efforts to Rescue Him.
2. President Ho's Participation in the Vietnamese Revolutionary League.
3. President Ho's Regaining of Freedom and His Return to Viet Nam.

1. **President Ho's Arrest and Our Efforts to Rescue Him**

His arrest in China towards the end of 1942 was known to all, but most people only had a general idea of how it had happened, and only a very few were clear about what he had done to obtain a political position favourable for the success of the revolution. Some people who did know something about Ho at that time wrote reminiscences in which they, pretending to be insiders, concocted some details as to how they had gained Ho's trust, been given personal instructions and assigned various important tasks. As a matter of fact, before joining the Vietnamese Revolutionary League in Liuzhou, Ho had concentrated on building up his physical strength, reading books and newspapers and translating Dr. Sun Yat-sen's *Three People's Principles*. He never proclaimed his political views, or met with Vietnamese "politicians" for he was cautious in dealings with this group of people. After joining the Vietnamese Revolutionary League, he maintained good relations with everyone, hoping to pull everyone together with the common goal of resisting Japan and saving the nation. It was because of this attitude that he won the respect and trust of Zhang Fakui, who finally granted him total freedom. (I have consulted some recently available firsthand data on the Chinese Kuomintang, which will serve to prove explicitly and irrefutably the truth of what

I describe below.)

The fact was that after more than a year's work in Cao Bang, the Viet Minh had organizationally spread to all the provinces in Viet Bac. The worldwide war against fascism being rapidly gaining momentum, President Ho thought it imperative for him to go to Chongqing, the capital of wartime China, to meet with Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Ching Ling (Mrs. Sun Yat-sen), who was Chairwoman of the China Branch of the International Anti-Aggression League, in order to establish formal relations with China, one of the five major anti-fascist allies.

On August 20, 1942, Le Quang Ba accompanied President Ho from Pac Bo to the Sino-Vietnamese border and returned after he had entrusted a Chinese comrade with the responsibility of acting as Ho's guide. Ho was arrested when he got to Zurong Street, Tianbao Prefecture, Guangxi Province.

President Ho had intended to go to Chongqing to pay his respects to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek as representative of the Viet Nam Branch of the International Anti-Aggression League and to meet leaders of the China Branch of the League in order to discuss resistance to Japan. As a matter of course, President Ho ought to have been extended a warm welcome and given strong support by the Chinese government, which was fighting against Japan. Instead, the local Chinese authorities had him arrested and imprisoned under the pretext that his identity papers were not in order.

It was not until the end of October 1942 that we learned from Chinese sources of President Ho's arrest. The Cao Bang Provincial Party Committee promptly decided to mobilize mass organizations and overseas Vietnamese to write a joint letter to the Chinese authorities, demanding immediate release of the veteran revolutionary Ho Chi Minh, on the ground that Ho was leading the Vietnamese movement to resist Japan. At the same time, it dispatched Hoang Dinh Rong to the Sino-Vietnamese border to send a telegram to Sun Fo, President of the Legislative Yuan of the Chinese government, on behalf of the Viet Nam Branch of the International Anti-Aggression

League demanding Ho's immediate release. The original text of the telegram, which was in Chinese, reads as follows.

President Sun,

Our representative Ho Chi Minh was arrested in Jingxi on his way to Chongqing to present a banner and pay respects to Generalissimo Chiang. We entreat you to cable the local authorities to release him immediately.

Sun Fo had the telegram transmitted to Wu Tiecheng, Secretary-General of the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang. On November 9, Wu sent a telegram to Guangxi provincial government and to Zhang Fakui calling for an immediate investigation of the case and for Ho's release. But the Guangxi government and Zhang couldn't investigate the case because Ho was being escorted from Tongzheng to Nanning.

In mid-November of 1942, I went to Nhuong Ban to discuss with Vu Anh, Bac Vong and Pham Van Dong what measures we ought to take to rescue President Ho. We didn't consider it of much use just to write letters or send telegrams to the Chinese authorities alone. We thought we must create a climate of world opinion that would exert pressure on the Kuomintang. Therefore, we decided to write to the major news agencies around the world. I wrote in Chinese to the Chinese Central News Agency while Pham Van Dong wrote in French to the Soviet Union's TASS, America's U.P.I., Britain's Reuters and France's Agence France-Presse. The contents of these letters were as follows:

Sino-Vietnamese Frontline
November 15, 1942

Recently, there has been an extremely serious misunderstanding between the Chinese authorities and the Vietnamese revolutionary party. When he was on his way to Chongqing to present a banner and pay respects to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and to enter into discussions with the China Branch of the International Anti-Aggression League as representative of the Viet Nam

Branch of the said League, our revolutionary comrade Ho Chi Minh, travelling from Jingxi to Tianbao on September 2, was arrested by the Chinese authorities on the pretext that his identity papers were not in conformity with the regulations.

Thanks to Comrade Ho Chi Minh's efforts, the Viet Nam Branch of the International Anti-Aggression League was established in 1941. It is composed of various mass organizations (youth, women, peasant associations and so forth). It has a total membership of over 200,000 and its sub-branches are to be found all over Viet Nam, from Nam Ky (South Viet Nam) to Trung Ky (Central Viet Nam) and Bac Ky (North Viet Nam).

Comrade Ho Chi Minh is one of the leading members of the Viet Nam Branch and enjoys high prestige among the people. His arrest in China has aroused much anti-Chinese resentment among Vietnamese revolutionaries. Recently, many people's organizations in Viet Nam have written to the Chinese authorities in Chongqing, explaining the reason for Ho's going to China, but he is still kept in custody. Would your agency please intercede for him and ask the Chinese authorities to release him at once?

Your agency may make this telegram public if it thinks necessary.

When the wire services in Chongqing received this telegram, President Ho had already been taken to Guilin. Several months passed and nothing came out of the investigation. Later, Ho was sent back to Liuzhou and handed over to the Fourth War Zone. He was treated as a political suspect and detained in a military detention centre, where he was given food, allowed to read books and newspapers and exempted from forced labour. In July 1943 Zhang Fakui, Commander of the Fourth War Zone, came to the sudden realization of Ho's international status. Zhang immediately instructed General Hou Zhiming of the Zone's Political Department to brainwash

him.

Hou Zhiming respected Ho, often had meals with him and spoke with him as an equal. But whenever Hou asked him about his identity, Ho would decline to give an answer. It was not until an anti-Party traitor, Tran Bao, informed against him that they learned that Ho Chi Minh was none other than Ly Thuy, Nguyen Ai Quoc and Hoang Quoc Tuan, all aliases of the leader of the Communist Party and the Viet Minh.

The reason Tran Bao revealed Ho's identity to the Chinese authorities was that he wanted Ho out of the way —either completely deprived of freedom of action or killed —so that he could consolidate his position within the Party. It turned out that once Zhang Fakui learned of Ho's true identity, he treated him better and with greater respect. In January 1944 Zhang wrote a report to the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang, in which he said, "Ho is still under the custody of the Political Department. I am treating him with due respect in order to win him over." Actually, Zhang's real intention was to release Ho and let him return to Viet Nam, something over which Chiang Kai-shek's special representative in Liuzhou was furious. Nonetheless, Zhang remained steadfast in his resolve.

2. **President Ho's Participation in the Vietnamese Revolutionary League**

As I said earlier in Part Three, the Fourth War Zone was scheming to establish the Vietnamese Anti-Aggression League in order to place the Vietnamese revolution under its leadership, and to establish a provisional government with Viet Bac as its base and Three People's Principles as the fundamental guiding principle for national reconstruction to facilitate Chinese troops to enter Viet Nam. The Viet Minh exposed this scheme, which forced the Fourth War Zone to shelve these plans. But when Vietnamese Nationalist Party leaders Vu Hong Khanh and Nghiem Ke To, who had the backing of the Chinese Kuomintang in Chongqing, came to Liuzhou from Kunming, the Fourth War zone did a tactical flip-flop and prepared to set up a Vietnamese Revolutionary League which

would exclude any Viet Minh members.

On October 1, 1942, the Vietnamese Revolutionary League (hereafter known as the Viet Cach) held its inaugural meeting in Liuzhou. The meeting elected its Central Executive Committee which consisted of seven members: Truong Boi Cong, Nguyen Hai Than, Vu Hong Khanh, Nghiem Ke To, Tran Bao, Nong Kinh Du and Truong Trung Phung. The members of its Standing Committee were Truong Boi Cong, Nguyen Hai Than and Vu Hong Khanh. Truong Boi Cong and Nguyen Hai Than headed both of the lists. But Vu Hong Khanh and Nghiem Ke To, who were sent from Chongqing, actually dominated the Committee.

To make the Vietnamese Revolutionary League better serve the entry of the Chinese troops into Viet Nam, Zhang Fakui appointed Hou Zhiming, Director of the Political Department of the Fourth War Zone, advisory representative of the League.

Hou planned to convene a meeting on September 1, 1943 to discuss ways of consolidating the Vietnamese Revolutionary League, but the meeting never took place because Truong Boi Cong, Nguyen Hai Than, Vu Hong Khanh and Nghiem Ke To could not bring themselves to agree on any matter. In truth, the four were caught up in a power struggle. As a result, a kind of stalemate hung over the League throughout that year.

When he discovered that Hou Zhiming was not trying hard to handle matters well, Zhang Fakui himself took over the reins, appointing General Xiao Wen as his assistant, and set up an advisory representative office with Xiao Wen serving as director.

Xiao Wen exchanged views with President Ho before proposing to convene a national congress of the Vietnamese Revolutionary League to elect additional members, among whom he meant to include Ho. President Ho said that it would be inappropriate to call it a national congress of the Vietnamese Revolutionary League, because all the members of the League were Vietnamese nationals residing abroad. It should, instead, be called a conference of the overseas organizations of

the Viet Cach. As to whether he should join the Viet Cach, Ho said that he would leave it for Zhang Fakui and Director Xiao Wen to decide. President Ho also suggested that Nguyen Tuong Tam be invited to the conference since Nguyen, though he had been a member of the pro-Japanese Dai Viet Party, was quite learned and would be very grateful to Commander Zhang Fakui for the invitation and might turn against the Japanese.

Xiao Wen reported what Ho had suggested to Zhang, who was delighted and decided to hold a conference immediately to consolidate the leadership of the Viet Cach.

The Conference was held from March 25 to 28, 1944 in Liuzhou. Fifteen representatives from various organizations attended the Conference. Among the representatives were Le Tung Son from the Liberation League of the Overseas Vietnamese (originally under the Viet Minh) in Yunnan Province, China, Nguyen Thanh Dong (member of the Viet Minh) from a special detachment stationed in Nanning, Ho Duc Thanh (member of the Viet Minh) from the Longzhou Liberation League, Nguyen Tuong Tam from the Dai Viet Party, and Ho Chi Minh from the Viet Nam Branch of the International Anti-Aggression League.

The organizations mentioned above had not joined the Vietnamese Revolutionary League.

After reshuffle, Nguyen Hai Than, Vu Hong Khanh and Nong Kinh Du, who had been among the seven members of the Central Executive Committee, now became members of the Control Commission. Le Tung Son, Bo Xuan Luat and Tran Dinh Xuyen were elected members of the Executive Committee and President Ho and Nguyen Tuong Tam alternate members. Before long Tran Dinh Xuyen was replaced by President Ho, who thus acquired a solid position in the Viet Cach.

3. **President Ho's Regaining of Freedom and His Return to Viet Nam**

Not long after the reorganization of the Viet Cach in Liuzhou (March 28, 1944), Xiao Wen left for Kunming in early June to reorganize the Yunnan Branch of the Viet Cach. The outcome of the reorganization was: three of the five

members of the Executive Committee were Viet Minh members, namely, Pham Viet Tu, Ly Dao and Pham Minh Sinh; two of the three members of its Standing Committee were Viet Minh members, namely, Pham Viet Tu and Ly Dao; and Duong Bao Son, also member of the Viet Minh, was among the three members of the Control Commission. Being very much displeased, Vu Hong Khanh and Nghiem Ke To vehemently opposed the result. Xiao Wen promptly issued an order to arrest Nghiem Ke To and Vu Quang Pham who were engaged in activities aimed at subverting the reorganization in Dongxing. He also planned to have Vu Hong Khanh, who was in Kunming, arrested under charges of "having violated discipline and tried to sabotage the Viet Cach Branch", but in vain because Vu was under the aegis of the Chinese authorities in Chongqing. However, Vu Hong Khanh was never allowed to get involved in anything in Liuzhou again.

On August 9, 1944, President Ho was granted complete freedom by Zhang Fakui. He made plans to return to Viet Nam right away.

Before departure, he submitted to Zhang a work plan, which outlined his future course of action and in which he set forth a number of concrete requests for aid and assistance.

The plan included setting up in the border area two guerrilla bases that would be close to each other for the convenience of mutual assistance and that would need 600 rifles. Another 400 rifles would be needed to arm smaller detachments which could be counted on to conduct guerrilla warfare when there was fighting and do propaganda work at other times. Ho requested 25,000 Indo-Chinese money for food for the first two months and a certain amount of Chinese money for travelling expenses from Liuzhou to Viet Nam.

For his own personal benefit, Ho requested the following:

1) A letter from Zhang Fakui addressed to various patriotic organizations in Viet Nam.

2) A letter from the Central Committee of the Viet Cach sending him back to Viet Nam to work.

3) A military map of Viet Nam.

4) A long-term travel permit for trips between China and Viet Nam.

5) Some propaganda material, for instance, "Records of Atrocity Committed by Japanese Invaders" and other illustrated material.

6) A pistol for self-defence.

7) Money to cover personal expenses during the first phase of his work.

Zhang immediately gave Ho a passport for long-term use and other necessary identification documents, some medicine and 76,000 yuan of Chinese notes.

As for funds for setting up guerrilla bases and organizing small guerrilla detachments, Zhang said he would have to give the matter further consideration.

On September 20, 1944, together with 18 cadres, President Ho left Liuzhou and returned to Cao Bang by way of Longzhou, Jingxi and Pingmeng.

According to reminiscences of Comrade Mo Yifan (a native of Guangxi, who went to Viet Nam in 1942 to join the Vietnamese revolution), after Ho had arrived in Pingmeng he had to remain in hiding at Lin Jiantong's place in Longyi Village because of his poor health and the cruel suppression of revolutionary activities by the enemy in Viet Nam. For his personal safety, the comrades in the village built a straw shed for him in the mountains and sent a few comrades to look after and protect him. Before long he was accompanied back to Pac Bo.

IV. President Ho's Meeting with the Commander of the U.S. Air Force in Kunming

This was known to very few people, too, who kept reticent about it as well. In my opinion the meeting was of great strategic importance and deserves a detailed description so that people will know the actual facts. My account here is based on recently available firsthand data of the Kuomintang.

In the winter of 1944 the United States sent several groups of planes from China to attack the Japanese troops stationed in Viet Nam. One of the planes got shot and crashed in a mountain forest not far from the city of Cao Bang. The pilot, First Lieutenant Shan, was pursued by Japanese troops. But the local people took him and provided cover for him before sending him to the border area to see President Ho. He was well looked after on the way, but unfortunately was unable to communicate with anyone as he understood neither Vietnamese nor French. When President Ho greeted him in English, "How do you do, pilot! Where are you from?" he was so excited that he hugged President Ho, saying, "When I heard your voice, I felt as if I were hearing the voice of my father in the United States." After a brief conversation, President Ho asked, "What can I do for you?" Shan replied, "My command headquarters is in Kunming. I hope you will help me by sending me back to the Chinese border from where I can go back to Kunming." President Ho said, "It happens that I will also be going to China on some business. Perhaps you can go with me." Shan exclaimed, "That'll be wonderful! When in China, I'll ask our command headquarters to invite you to go to Kunming with me."

Thus, they quickly made preparations for their trip. Phung The Tai would act as their guide for the trip to Kunming. They travelled for five days in China and were treated differently by the Chinese authorities, who extended a warm welcome only to First Lieutenant Shan and had him accompanied to Kunming. They did not make arrangements for President Ho to go on to Kunming, neither did they try to stop him. This was undoubtedly because President Ho had been invited by the U.S. Air Force Commander to go to Kunming and he held a long-term passport issued by Zhang Fakui himself. Also, Zhang had sent a report to Chongqing, confirming that President Ho had been invited to go to Kunming by the Americans.

By the end of 1944 President Ho got to Yiliang and stayed with Huang Guangping. A few days after he had obtained

some information on new developments, he set out for Kunming.

In Kunming, he stayed with Tong Minh Phuong who had once pledged to sacrifice all his property for the revolution. To all appearances a coffee shop, the place, in fact, was meant for President Ho to make contacts with other people. The Tongs were extremely nice to President Ho, treating him almost as if he were their father. Venerable Le Nhuan Chi and Pham Viet Tu, who had come to Kunming from Liuzhou in 1942, joined the Tongs and tried their best to help President Ho.

Having come to Kunming in his capacity as member of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Revolutionary League, President Ho would naturally want to know how things stood with the Yunnan Branch of the League and help the cadres to raise their level of ideological understanding and improve their work so that the Branch could become a revolutionary body trusted by the people.

However, the chief objective of President Ho's trip to Kunming was to get in touch with the Commander of the U.S. Air Force there so as to secure international recognition for the Vietnamese revolution in the allied anti-fascist front.

Before long, President Ho went to meet the Commander, General Claire Chennault, the two men had a very cordial talk.

President Ho told the Commander that all the Vietnamese anti-Japanese organizations had joined the Viet Minh. The Commander asked Ho if the Viet Minh could set up a first-aid station to help pilots of the Allied Powers who might land in Viet Nam. (Actually he meant a landing ground for helicopters and living quarters for U.S. army liaison personnel.)

President Ho gave him a positive reply and expressed his readiness to co-operate with the Allied Forces in resisting Japan. He also stated that anti-Japanese organizations had made considerable headway in Viet Nam and that the anti-Japanese forces there would be further strengthened if the United States provided them with arms, ammunition and equipment. As to giving help and protection to the air force

personnel of the Allied Forces, Ho said that this was exactly what the Viet Minh had been doing, helping First Lieutenant Shan to escape the Japanese and sending him safely back to China was a good example of this.

General Chennault was pleased but he did not forget to request that the Viet Minh provide intelligence to the American side. President Ho said that the Viet Minh would not serve as intelligence agents for the U.S. but for the benefit of joint resistance to Japanese aggression, it would provide the Americans with information on the political, economic and social conditions in Viet Nam as well as on the activities of the Japanese troops. He pointed out that we would regard this as an act of close co-operation between the Viet Minh and the Allied Forces, that this kind of co-operation was exactly what we had all along been saying to our people ever since the formation of the Viet Minh in 1941, and that we knew that only by siding with the Allies and closely co-operating with them in resisting Japan could Viet Nam rid itself of Japan's fascist rule.

Apart from meeting General Chennault, President Ho met with other people on the U.S. side, with whom he discussed specific problems. When he was ready to leave Kunming, the Americans presented him with 6 pistols, 20,000 cartridges, some medicine and cash, which he accepted with the exception of cash. He extended his gratitude and expressed the hope that the U.S. would give the Viet Minh more assistance in future.

The following important events took place at home and abroad during President Ho's stay in Kunming.

1. In China, following the occupation of Liuzhou by Japan on November 11, 1944, the Headquarters of the Fourth War Zone was moved to Bose, a small town in Guangxi. The "VIPs" of the Vietnamese Revolutionary League, Truong Boi Cong, Nguyen Hai Than, Tran Bao and Nong Kinh Du, fled Guangxi. The National Rehabilitation Army, 600 strong, came apart: it dwindled down to only 140 people who, together with Bo Xuan Luat and Le Tung Son, moved to Bose along with the Headquarters of the Fourth War Zone.

2. In Viet Nam, the Japanese seized power from the French on March 9, 1945, and on March 13, Bao Dai announced his allegiance to Japan.

3. In France, on March 24, 1945, the De Gaulle government declared its determination to restore its rule in Viet Nam. The Chiang Kai-shek government, unwilling to invite trouble with regard to its relations with France, refrained from expressing its opposition. The Vietnamese Nationalist Party members in Kunming also kept silent. On April 7, acting on President Ho's instructions, Duong Bao Son held a press conference in Kunming in the name of the Yunnan Branch of the Vietnamese Revolutionary League. He went on record as solidly opposing De Gaulle's declaration, saying, "The destiny of Viet Nam must be determined by the Vietnamese people. The French have no right to interfere. At present, the Vietnamese people and their armed forces are fighting against the enemy under the leadership of the revolutionary organizations (purposely not mentioning the Viet Minh or the Viet Cach)." Xiao Wen's presence at the press conference made people believe that Duong Bao Son's views were shared by the Fourth War Zone.

Another matter should also be mentioned here. In Viet Nam after Japan seized power from France, some of the French troops fled across the Chinese border. Zhang Fakui proposed that China, in order to handle this matter, maintain a military alliance with France and co-ordinate all military moves. At the same time he proposed that China help in every possible way the Vietnamese Revolutionary Party (the Vietnamese Revolutionary League) and that after the Japanese were driven out of Viet Nam, the Party set up a new regime and declare Viet Nam independent. (See Xing Senzhou's *Collection of Documents on Viet Nam*, published in July 1947. Xing was a representative of the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang in a region near the Sino-Vietnamese border.) Seeing the self-contradictoriness of this plan, a journalist on Chiang Kai-shek's side asked, "How can you assist France while at the same time help Viet Nam to win

independence?" Zhang Fakui explained: "Assisting France is only a friendly gesture; helping Viet Nam to win independence, however, is the essence of the plan."

From the above we can see that at that time Chongqing was in support of a comeback for France in Viet Nam while Zhang Fakui and Xiao Wen stood for helping the Vietnamese Revolutionary League to set up a new regime and declare Viet Nam independent (naturally, under China's "wing"). This was the main reason why the Chongqing authorities distrusted Zhang Fakui and had Lu Han take over from Zhang the overall responsibility for China's proposed military entry into Viet Nam. Of course, the Chongqing authorities also intended to make use of the opportunity to remove Long Yun in Yunnan.

4. In March 1945, Commander-in-Chief He Yingqin of the Chinese Army arrived in Kunming to make preparations for the Chinese troops' entry into Viet Nam. On March 30, Xiao Wen went to see He Yingqin in Kunming, where he asked He to let him continue to be responsible for helping the Vietnamese Revolutionary League to establish a pro-Chinese government after the Chinese troops had entered Viet Nam. He approved Xiao's request. (For details, see "Years After the August Revolution", pp. 223-229 below.)

The fact that there existed differences between Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Fakui enabled us to understand why President Ho was well treated in Liuzhou and was elected member of the Central Committee of the Viet Cach (March 1944), why he was able to regain freedom and return to Viet Nam with 18 cadres (September 1944), why he could go to Kunming and get in touch with the Americans without encountering any obstacles (end of 1944), why he could carry out work in the name of the Viet Cach, and finally why he could return to Bose and back home freely.

President Ho spent quite a long time in Kunming and it was not until early April 1945 that he went to Bose. Two days later, Xiao Wen also arrived from Kunming.

Xiao sent a few special detachments into Viet Nam:

—Bo Xuan Luat to lead 50 men to enter from Longbang;

—Truong Trung Phung to lead 50 men from Bonan;

—Le Tung Son to lead 10 men from Pingmeng;

—Ngo Quang Hop to lead 50 men from Dong Khe and That Khe; and

—Ho Duc Thanh to lead some people to enter from Binh Gia.

When these special detachments were preparing to enter Viet Nam, President Ho set out to return to Viet Nam.

In May 1945 President Ho arrived in Viet Bac and met with Vu Anh and Vo Nguyen Giap, whom he asked to select a place to serve as a liaison centre. After consulting with Song Hao and Chu Van Tan, Vu and Vo chose Tan Trao Village to be the most proper place, where the people's government had been set up with a sound mass following. Furthermore, the place was located in a strategic mountainous region and away from the highway.

Not long after President Ho had arrived in Tan Trao, Second Lieutenant Thomas and several other Americans landed on the ground in a forest we had just cleared.

Second Lieutenant Thomas and the others were settled down in Tan Trao to do liaison work. President Ho often went to see them and had cordial talks with them on world situation and prospects of the anti-fascist war. Mr. Thomas was at his ease, being convinced that the Viet Minh was truly on the side of the Allies.

We maintained such ties with the American side because we wanted thereby to broaden our influence among the people so as to create an atmosphere conducive to launching insurrections and seizing power from the Japanese. At the same time President Ho also realized that we might not be able to seize power throughout the country before the Allied Forces entered Viet Nam, since our own strength was still very weak; and as the Allied Forces certainly included French troops, we had consequently to negotiate with France. President Ho had already sent a message via the American wire services to the French General Sainteny stationed in Kunming, proposing to

meet and exchange views. But it did not come about due to certain obstacles. After the August Revolution, however, General Sainteny came to Hanoi heading the French delegation to be stationed in Viet Nam. He held negotiations with President Ho and both signed a preliminary agreement on March 6, 1946.

Only a few people knew anything about President Ho's trip to Chongqing to meet Chiang Kai-shek (which did not materialize because of Ho's arrest on the way) before the August Revolution, his meeting with the American Air Force Commander in Kunming and his contacts with General Sainteny of France, and they refrained from mentioning these things for fear of being labelled as "right deviationists" or being accused of compromising with the enemy. Their fear was groundless, because they didn't fully understand the strategic and tactical significance of those steps taken by President Ho.

As is known to all, when the Party decided at its Eighth Plenary Session held in May 1941 to replace the Anti-Imperialist Front with the Viet Minh Front, we declared that we were siding with the anti-fascist Allied Powers. We then sent 12 persons to China to acquire the skill of demolition and 60 people to study military affairs. The fact that our people provided cover to the American pilot and President Ho travelled to Kunming to meet the American Air Force Commander also demonstrated that we were on the side of the Allied Forces, and so did President Ho's intention to hold talks with General Sainteny of France. During the Second World War, the two opposing camps were clearly demarcated—the fascist camp: Germany, Italy and Japan, and the Allies: the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, France and China. The Seventh Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow in 1935 decided that Communist Parties of various countries must form an anti-fascist united front. Since we were opposing fascism, we should therefore support the allied anti-fascist front which was already in existence. Though we stated on numerous occasions that we supported the Allies, we had not at this time established direct contact with them. We were

convinced that fascism was bound to be defeated and the Allies were bound to be victorious. Hence, we had to set up some kind of concrete contact with the Allies so that we would gain our rightful status and the right to speak once the Allies were victorious. President Ho expressed his willingness to enter into a dialogue with France because he believed that after the defeat of Japan, the Allies would approve of France's return to Viet Nam as a matter of course, and we would be caught in a passive situation if we did not do something beforehand. Therefore, the important measures taken by President Ho mentioned earlier, i.e., his trip to Chongqing to see Chiang Kai-shek, his meeting with the American Air Force Commander in Kunming, and his plans to talk with General Sainteny of France, were all sagacious decisions of strategic importance. Tactically, President Ho knew very well that no revolution could succeed without the support of the masses; without the masses one was powerless. Ho also believed that it was necessary to build up an armed force of our own because no struggle could be waged without it. Of course we could seize weapons from the enemy, but to do so we had to have some military capability to begin with. He knew equally well that the United States, though sympathetic to France with respect to the latter's return to Viet Nam, would replace it in Viet Nam when the time came. As to Chiang Kai-shek, though he had to acknowledge that Viet Nam was a protectorate of France, he also wanted to use Chinese military entry into Viet Nam as an opportunity to give France some trouble. President Ho had foreseen that neither the United States nor Chiang Kai-shek would give us much aid but it would be beneficial to us if we could impress them a little by meeting with them and thus obtain some aid from them, even if it were not great. From a tactical point of view, such meetings would also serve to divide them and restrain them from doing anything harmful to us. That was the reason why the secret agents sent from Chongqing got so vexed when Zhang Fakui allowed President Ho to join the Vietnamese Revolutionary League, set him free to return to Viet Nam and let him go to Kunming to get in touch with

the Americans. In their reports to Chongqing, they accused Zhang Fakui of being Leftist and Xiao Wen of being pro-Communist and alleged that the purpose of Ho Chi Minh's trip to Kunming was to "forge an alliance with the United States to oppose China" and that his intention to enter into a dialogue with France was to "reach a compromise with France to oppose China". It can thus be seen that President Ho's intention to see Chiang Kai-shek, his meeting with the Americans and his negotiations with the French were of strategic and tactical significance. These strategies and tactics all served the interest of the Vietnamese revolution. History has thrown light on this.

V. The Party's National Conference and the National Assembly Held in Tan Trao

Around June 1945 in Lang Son, we discussed our plans and decided that Le Thiet Hung, Hoang Dien and Be Chan Hung go back to Hoi Hoan to improve work there and set up a local government while Dam Minh Vien, Mo Yifan and myself go to Bac Son to work with the local comrades for the liberation of the capital of Lang Son Province.

As we were about to leave, I got a telegram from the Central Committee asking me to return to Tan Trao to attend the National Party Conference which would be convened soon. I handed my work over to Dam Minh Vien and other comrades and left for Tan Trao with Hoang Huu Nam. There was no need to travel in disguise as there were people with arms to protect us all along the way, even during daytime. We passed through That Khe, Binh Gia, La Hien, Thuong Lung, Than Sa, Phu Do and Quan Vuong and crossed the De Mountains before arriving in Tan Trao.

The comrades there took me to see President Ho at once. He was not living in the village but in a straw hut built on a hillside not far from the village. Still wearing coarse blue clothing like the Nung people did, he worked tirelessly, with a typewriter on his table. He was stronger than before, suffering

no more from malaria as he often had during the period right after he had returned from China. He inquired in detail about things in Lang Son and then said: "That's good. We are now in a position to launch insurrections to seize political power. When comrades from the North, the Centre and the South have all arrived in a few days, we'll convene the National Party Conference and adopt a resolution on the launching of insurrections. It is something very urgent and most important."

Seeing that President Ho was very busy and had a lot of things to attend to, I excused myself and returned to the village to have a look around.

Hoang Huu Nam and I settled down in a villager's house. More comrades arrived from the plains. One day American planes dropped some dried food and army uniforms on an open ground in the village. Realizing that these supplies were from the Allied Forces, everybody was very happy, but nobody seemed to be aware of how extremely difficult and complicated the situation would become if the Allied Forces arrived, and this was exactly the problem that President Ho was pondering over.

We had by then set up a radio station and thus could readily get informed of new developments of the world.

On May 2, 1945, the Soviet troops drove straight into Berlin, the last lair of the German fascists. On August 8, the Soviet army, after defeating fascist Germany, entered northeast China and routed Japan's Kwantung Army there. What should Viet Nam do if the Allied Forces marched into Viet Nam following Japan's defeat? For instance, the Chinese army was stepping up its preparations to enter Viet Nam, and probably the British, American and French armies would follow suit. What should be done in that case? It was evident to us all that the defeat of Japanese fascism would provide a golden opportunity for us to liberate the Fatherland, and it was equally apparent that the arrival of the Allied Forces would complicate matters. So, it was imperative for us to analyse the situation and adopt strategies to deal with such an eventuality.

Presided over by President Ho, the National Party Con-

ference was held on August 13, 1945. Attending the Conference were Truong Chinh and Nguyen Luong Bang from Bac Bo (the northern part), Nguyen Chi Thanh from Trung Bo (the central part), Ha Huy Giap from Nam Bo (the southern part), Vo Nguyen Giap and myself from the Viet Bac area, Duong Tri Trung and Tran Duc Vinh who came back from Thailand and Laos, and some other comrades whose names I do not remember now.

The Conference was convened in a villager's house in Tan Trao Village.

After hearing the reports made by comrades from various regions, President Ho said that though Japan had not yet surrendered, German fascism had announced its surrender following the fall of Berlin to the Soviet army. The 600,000 Japanese troops in "Manchukuo" having been annihilated by the Soviet army, Japanese fascists' surrender was a foregone conclusion. Following the eventual surrender of Japan, the Allied Forces would come to take over Indo-China. It might be the British army, the French army, or the Chinese Kuomintang army as the Chinese army had been preparing to enter Viet Nam ever since 1940-41. As far as the Allied Powers were concerned, we could not prevent their forces from entering Viet Nam; even if we tried, they would come all the same. Therefore, we would have no other alternative than contact them and enter into a dialogue with them. To that end, we had to gain a strong position by winning independence from Japan. In other words, when Japan announced surrender, we had to lose no time launching a general insurrection to seize political power across the land. This was not something beyond our reach, because we had already had a mass following in every part of the country. Moreover, the French army had disintegrated after the Japanese army had seized its power in Viet Nam, and most of the pro-Japanese security corps had come under our influence.

The Conference was short but fruitful. Except those comrades who stayed behind to participate in the National Assembly, the rest of the representatives hurried back to their own

localities or units to prepare to launch insurrections and seize political power. To serve as Secretary of the Party Committee of the Viet Bac Liberated Area, I was assigned the task of building and consolidating revolutionary governments in this area so as to provide a fall-back for the insurgents just in case they had to retreat north.

On August 16, 1945, the General Headquarters of the Viet Minh convened a National Assembly in a great hall in Tan Trao. Present were about 60 deputies from various political parties, mass organizations and different nationalities. I attended the Assembly in my capacity as a member of the Viet Minh's General Headquarters.

President Ho, as leader of the Viet Minh, gave an address, in which he analysed the domestic and international situation exactly as he had done at the Party's National Conference. He expounded on the Viet Minh's fundamental guideline of uniting the Vietnamese people in resisting France and Japan and establishing the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. As by then Japan had already announced its unconditional surrender, President Ho also discussed the problems that might crop up when the Allied Forces came to take over Indo-China. He set forth ways of dealing with the army of each of the Allied Powers that might enter Viet Nam soon. According to Ho, if we resisted, this would mean refusing to allow the Allied Forces to enter Viet Nam, which would be improper and unjustified. We had to make contact with them from a strong position, which would be out of the question short of political power. It meant that we had to contact them in our capacity as representatives of an independent Viet Nam. We had to move swiftly to launch nationwide insurrections and seize state power from the Japanese. With regard to Japanese troops, we had to explain things to them so that they would readily hand power over to us, which was not impossible since Japan had already surrendered and since we had behind us a mighty force of the people who were under the leadership of the Viet Minh. Furthermore, we had our liberated areas from which we could launch attacks on the enemy and to which we could withdraw

our forces. We had to unite and be resolved to overcome all sorts of difficulties in order to win independence of the Fatherland and establish a new Viet Nam—the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

This was the general guideline that we had to understand thoroughly. However, we had also to anticipate the possibility of facing most difficult situations, namely, a massive French military offensive in Viet Nam with the avid support of Britain and the United States and the approval of the Chinese Kuomintang. If that happened, what should we do? We would have to fight back, with knives and spears and all kinds of homemade weapons. We would rather die than live as slaves. However, while fighting back, we would have to hold talks with the French. How were we to conduct such talks? To lessen our losses and win the sympathy of the French people and world public opinion, we would have to ask France to recognize the independence of Viet Nam within the French Union, allowing Viet Nam to have its own national assembly, government and armed forces and administer its own financial and foreign affairs, and we would guarantee France's economic and cultural rights and interests in Viet Nam. In five years, Viet Nam should be granted complete independence. If France should reject these conditions or were insincere in accepting them, we would have to make a determined resistance. Although we were weak in terms of military strength, justice was on our side, as was the sympathy of the French people and world opinion. We would assuredly win victory.

All the deputies were excited and unanimously agreed with the general guideline of the Viet Minh and the order to launch nationwide insurrections. At the same time they elected the Viet Nam National Liberation Committee, headed by President Ho Chi Minh, which would call for and lead insurrections across the country.

The deputies returned to various localities as soon as the Assembly concluded. Leading comrades of the Central Committee working in the plains areas had already returned after the Party's National Conference. Vo Nguyen Giap and some

other military cadres got ready to lead their army units southwards to capture Thai Nguyen. President Ho would also go to the plains. In accordance with the Central Committee's decision, I stayed behind in Tan Trao to consolidate the rear area so that it would serve as the base for the forthcoming insurrections.

The question of entering into dialogues with France was discussed by President Ho at the National Assembly held in Tan Trao. After the August Revolution, he held negotiations with General Sainteny and reached a preliminary agreement with him on March 6, 1946. But later documents concerning this Assembly made no mention of these negotiations. I believe that this matter should be clarified, as it was a wise, far-sighted decision which took into account our relative strength compared with that of our enemy. Our victory in the anti-French war was due to President Ho's sagacious leadership, which stressed resolute struggle with flexible tactics. This victory created a most advantageous environment for ourselves.

Staying behind with me in Tan Trao were Hoang Huu Nam, who was in charge of maintaining contact with the radio station of the Central Committee, and Le Gian and Mrs. Chau, who worked as my assistants. A few days later when we got ready to start work, we received news that the Japanese troops in Thai Nguyen had handed over some of their weapons and that our army had passed through Thai Nguyen unimpeded and were marching towards the plains. The good news followed one after another.

On August 19, 1946, the people of Hanoi rose up and seized political power. This event was later known as the August Revolution.

On August 21, the Viet Minh sent a telegram to Hue demanding that Bao Dai abdicate. Bao Dai immediately sent a reply, in which he invited Viet Minh's representatives to Hue to take over power.

On August 24, Bao Dai announced his intentions to become a citizen of the independent Viet Nam.

On August 25, the ceremony at which Bao Dai handed over his imperial seal and sword to Viet Minh representatives Tran Huy Lieu and Cu Huy Can was held in the imperial palace at Hue.

On August 30, President Ho returned to Hanoi. The Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam was officially established. Members of the new government were as follows:

President and concurrently Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ho Chi Minh
Minister of the Interior	Vo Nguyen Giap
Minister of National Defence	Chu Van Tan
Minister of Finance	Pham Van Dong
Minister of Economic Affairs	Nguyen Manh Ha
Minister of Labour	Le Van Hien
Minister of Youth	Duong Duc Hien
Minister of Education	Dang Thai Mai
Minister of Justice	Vu Trong Khanh
Minister of Communications Engineering	Dao Trong Kim
Minister of Public Health and Medical Care	Pham Ngoc Thach
Minister of Social Affairs	Nguyen Van To
Minister of Propaganda	Tran Huy Lieu
Ministers Without Portfolio	Cu Huy Can and Nguyen Van Xuan

Tran Huy Lieu and Nguyen Van Xuan were formerly members of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party who later joined the Indo-Chinese Communist Party.

On September 2, 1945, more than half a million people rallied in Ba Dinh Park, where red flags with gold stars fluttered all over the place. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon, President Ho ascended the rostrum and in his capacity as President of the Provisional Government read the *Declaration of Independence*, which proclaimed the founding of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

To co-operate with the people in Hanoi, Hue and other

parts of the country, the people in Saigon took action on August 24, hoisting the gold-starred red flag everywhere in the city. In the evening, the imperial commissioner, Ho Van Nga, handed over power to the Viet Minh.

On August 25, the inaugural meeting of the Nam Bo Administrative Council headed by Tran Van Giau was held in the Saigon City Hall. It called for the great unity of the people all over the country.

On September 2, hundreds of thousands of people held a mass rally at the square behind Virgin Mary's Cathedral to listen to President Ho's announcement of the *Declaration of Independence*, which was broadcasted from Hanoi.

On September 4, the Viet Minh convened an enlarged meeting in the Saigon City Hall, inviting representatives of various mass organizations to form the Nam Bo People's Council to replace the Nam Bo Administrative Council. The Chairman of the Administrative Council Tran Van Giau became member of the People's Council and Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach its Chairman.

On hearing these news, we were excited and yet anxious to keep abreast of the new developments in the country. So we sent Hoang Huu Nam to Hanoi. It happened that the Central Committee asked him to stay there and appointed him Vice-Minister of the Interior to assist the venerable Huynh Thuc Khang who, at President Ho's invitation, had come from Quang Nam to replace Vo Nguyen Giap as Minister of the Interior. Thus Hoang Nuu Nam never returned to Tan Trao. About a week later, I went to Hanoi myself, where a mass rally of half a million people was going on, protesting British support for the French take-over of the headquarters of the Nam Bo People's Council (at 4 o'clock in the morning of September 23). I went straight to the Provisional Government—the office of the former Governor-General of the Bac Bo—to ask for instructions from President Ho and the Central Committee. President Ho said that we should focus our work on defending the power of the new regime and that I should return to Hanoi immediately and help the Central Committee to take control

of the situation. So, I went back to Tan Trao, made the necessary work arrangements, and returned to Hanoi with Le Gian and Mrs. Chau.

After arrival, I asked Nguyen Luong Bang to make work arrangements for Le Gian and Mrs. Chau. Then I went to stay at Trinh Van Bo's place on Hang Dao Street where President Ho had once stayed and later moved into 8 Hang Trong Street, a house which was next to the site of the former "Intelligence and Virtues Hall", opposite to the water pavilion in Hoan Kiem Lake and was later destroyed in a U.S. bombing.

Shortly afterwards, the Central Committee decided that Chu Van Tan return to Viet Bac to be in charge of the work in the liberated areas, that Vo Nguyen Giap serve concurrently as Minister of Defence and as Commander-in-Chief of the National Defence Army (originally called the Liberation Army) and that I serve concurrently as Vice-Minister of Defence and as General Political Commissar of the National Defence Army.

At this time, the British army was already in the south committing all sorts of atrocities. The Chinese troops that entered Viet Nam were not those under Zhang Fakui, which had been preparing to march into Viet Nam since 1940-1941, but the Yunnan troops commanded by Lu Han. Zhang Fakui only sent Xiao Wen to Viet Nam as a member of an advisory delegation to help the Vietnamese Revolutionary League to form a new government. Accompanying Xiao were Nguyen Hai Than and two infantry armies. The reason behind Chiang Kai-shek's sending the Yunnan troops into Viet Nam was to get rid of Long Yun in Yunnan, just the way he had gotten rid of Chen Jitang of Guangdong and Bai Chongxi of Guangxi before.

After British and Chinese armies took over Viet Nam, the situation became extremely complicated following the August Revolution.

VI. Years After the August Revolution

After the August Revolution, the situation became extremely tense. On the one hand, we had to deal with the Japanese troops, the British troops which were stationed south of the 16th parallel and Chiang Kai-shek's troops which were stationed north of the 16th parallel. On the other, we had to deal with the French troops which were attempting to stage a comeback in Indo-China with the support of Britain and the United States.

1. Dealing with the Japanese troops

The Japanese army, although it had surrendered unconditionally, declared that it would yield only to the Allied Powers and not to the Viet Minh, so instead of surrendering their arms to us, in some places they created troubles for us.

The principle adopted by the Central Committee towards the Japanese army was mainly to make it clear to them that Viet Nam belonged to the Vietnamese people. The Vietnamese people had been opposed to first French and then Japanese occupation. As the Vietnamese people had now risen up in order to win independence and freedom, the Japanese should support them in their just struggle. Even if the Japanese did not hand in their arms to us, they would have to give their arms to the Allied Forces when the latter arrived. Hence, handing in their arms to the Vietnamese would be a magnanimous act on their part which would be warmly received by the Vietnamese people and at the same time would do no harm at all to the Japanese themselves. If the Japanese chose to continue to oppose the Vietnamese people, the Vietnamese would have no other choice than to resolutely strike back; in this case, the Japanese would be the one who got hurt. Such an event would diminish their chances of ever returning to Japan alive. Viet Nam was now an independent state, and the Japanese should know better and support the Vietnamese people's independence.

Though the Japanese troops felt that our argument was convincing, they were bent on surrendering their arms to the

Allied Forces. In some places, they secretly handed some weapons over to us while in others, they sold some to us. Most of the Japanese troops took a neutral stand, never interfering with our activities. A few of them, fearing the vengeance of the Allied Forces, asked us to give them protection or give them cover among the local people. Though small in number, they could be found everywhere. Some of them, grateful for our kindness, helped us in training our troops, driving trucks, repairing machinery and so forth during our war against the French. I remember that when I was Secretary of the Fourth Joint Defence Zone Party Committee, Colonel Aiyama and First Lieutenant Aomatsu helped us in our work in Nghe An. Later, after returning to Japan, they became activists in the Japan-Viet Nam Friendship Association.

Though dealing with the Japanese troops posed a complicated problem, we were involved in it only for a short time. When the Allied Forces came, it became their problem and had nothing to do with us any more.

2. Dealing with the British Army in the South

Before Japan's surrender, the British and Americans reached an agreement to the effect that the British army would take charge of the war zone south of the 16th parallel. It was natural that the British army would disarm the Japanese troops in this area after Japan's surrender.

On September 12, 1945, i.e., less than a month after the surrender of Japan, 1,400 British troops, composed mostly of Indians, landed in Saigon under the command of Major General Glacey.

On September 20, the British army issued a notice banning the publication of Vietnamese newspapers and magazines and prohibiting Vietnamese from carrying arms.

On September 21, British warships transported French troops into Saigon and proclaimed martial law, which banned any local assembly and enforced a curfew from 9 o'clock in the evening to 5 o'clock the following morning.

On September 22, the British army seized the main prison in Saigon and released the 5,000 French prisoners of war who

had been captured and jailed by the Japanese. It also allowed the French troops to take arms and ammunition from the Japanese army's arsenal and guard the dock, warehouses, and the Ba Son Shipyard.

On September 23, the French troops, with the support of the British army, occupied the central police headquarters, the national treasury and the Saigon City Hall—the office of the Nam Bo People's Council, putting the greater part of Saigon under their control.

On October 5, France sent to Saigon reinforcements, composed of Europeans and Filipinos, under the command of General Leclere. On the same day, the French air-dropped troops in Cambodia and Laos with the objective of reoccupying the whole of Indo-China.

On October 12, the French troops occupied Gia Dinh, Go Vap and Phu My.

On October 23, the British and Indian troops occupied Thu Dau Mot and Bien Hoa and handed them over to the French troops for garrison.

On October 29, the French troops occupied Vinh Long.

On October 30, the French troops took Can Tho.

On February 1, 1946, the French army, after taking Ban Me Thuot, landed along the coast, occupying Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa and Da Lat. Within a few days the provincial capitals of Go Cong, My Tho, Sa Dec, Long Xuyen, Chau Doc, Ha Tien, Rach Gia and Ca Mau all fell to the French.

The Nam Bo People's Council had no other choice but to withdraw to Ben Tre, destroying bridges and damaging roads along the way, and begin anew the anti-French war. At the same time, the Council had to cope with the armed forces of the so-called *Etatistes* headed by Nguyen Hoa Hiep, member of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party, because these people were looting and plundering everywhere they went, undermining the war of resistance.

To aid the South, the North had Hoang Dinh Rong, Dam Minh Vien, Nguyen Binh and other comrades led troops down to the South and fought the French shoulder to shoulder with the people there. These comrades all laid down their lives on

the battle ground.

3. Dealing with Chiang Kai-shek's Army in the North

In the North, General Lu Han led an army of 200,000 men, including three army groups of the Yunnan Army and two army groups of the Central (Chiang Kai-shek's) Army, and entered Viet Nam from Yunnan to disarm the Japanese troops. Representing Zhang Fakui, General Xiao Wen also led a contingent of troops into Viet Nam using the pretext of helping the Vietnamese Revolutionary League to set up a government. It was an extremely complicated situation.

The Chongqing authorities assigned both Lu Han and Xiao Wen the task of "wiping out the Communists and capturing Ho Chi Minh" and setting up a puppet government to act as a lackey of the Chinese Kuomintang.

Lu Han and Xiao Wen had long since known that though Vu Hong Khanh and Nghiem Ke To were ostensibly working for the Vietnamese Nationalist Party, they were actually serving the Chongqing authorities. In Yunnan they kept watch on Long Yun and in Guangxi they kept close tabs on Zhang Fakui. When Lu Han was about to fly to Hanoi, Vu Hong Khanh asked to go together with Lu, who rejected his request. When Vu got to Lao Cai at the end of September that year, the political power there had already been returned into the hands of the people with the support of Lu Han's subordinate Li Yousheng. Seeing that he couldn't do anything there, Vu Hong Khanh had to leave for Sa Pa, which he instigated Trieu Viet Hung and company to occupy. Li Yousheng had Trieu arrested at once and took Vu under custody until Chongqing ordered his release. Backed by Chiang Kai-shek's army, Vu and company set up organs to disseminate counter-revolutionary propaganda in Lao Cai, Yen Bai, Hghia Lo, Viet Tri, Phu Tho, Vinh Yen and Hai Ninh, but these organs were all under the encirclement of the local troops and people.

When Vu Hong Khanh arrived in Hanoi on October 20, Nguyen Van Xuan, Bui Van Hach, Pham Quang Chuc, Tran Ngoc Tuan and Tran Duc Chinh, formerly members of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party who had come over to the Viet

Minh, formed the "Committee for the Reorganization of the Nationalist Party". Vu Hong Khanh, Nghiem Ke To and others, finding no support from either Xiao Wen or Lu Han, continued with their unbridled activities with the support of the Chongqing authorities. In collusion with Nguyen Tuong Tam, Truong Tu Anh, Do Tien Hy and others, they recruited some government officials, public employees and capitalists into their party. Shielded by Chiang's troops, they committed all kinds of outrages and thus incurred the deep hatred of the masses.

In early September Nguyen Hai Than arrived in Lang Son. Relying on Xiao Wen's power and influence and his military strength, Nguyen disarmed some of our units and gathered the local officials and gentry together to attack the Viet Minh in public. After he arrived in Hanoi, he was elected by the Dai Viet people "supreme leader" and established offices on Quan Thanh Street and in other places, appointing Nhuong Tong party secretary, Nguyen Trieu Luat political commissar and Ta Nguyen Hoi finance commissioner. The offices flew the flag of the Vietnamese Revolutionary League. On the occasion of the Double Tenth (October 10, National Day of the Republic of China), the League held celebration activities in Hanoi's Grand Theatre. Xiao Wen, who was present, instructed Nguyen Hai Than to confine his speech to the topic of the 1911 Revolution only.

To free Xiao Wen and Lu Han of their apprehensions, President Ho openly declared on November 11, 1945 the voluntary dissolution of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, whose members would reorganize themselves into a Marxist Research Society. I was assigned to go to the Fourth Joint Defence Zone to explain the reason for the decision to the provincial Party organizations there. We were compelled by the circumstances then to make such an announcement. Nonetheless, the Party still existed, functioning underground and leading the people in their struggle.

The dissolution of the Communist Party eased the tense situation.

On November 19, Xiao Wen, on behalf of Zhang Fakui,

convened a reconciliatory meeting which was attended by the Vietnamese Nationalist Party, the Vietnamese Revolutionary League and the Viet Minh. Through consultation, the three parties reached an agreement to form a coalition government. They also agreed never to resort to military action when differences should arise among them in future, as well as to stop attacking each other in the newspapers. Finally, they also decided to send an armed force to the South to join the people there to resist foreign aggressors. Naturally, this armed force was completely composed of Viet Minh members.

While we agreed to the formation of a coalition government, we proposed holding a general election on December 23 according to plan, in order to form the National Assembly, which could then appoint a new government. This would be a more democratic approach. Vu Hong Khanh and Nguyen Hai Than requested postponement of the election alleging that they had had no time to make preparations. We agreed to postpone the election till January 6, 1946. When that day was drawing near, they again said that they were not ready yet; instead, they suggested that the general election be dispensed with and requested that 50 seats be given to the Nationalist Party and 20 seats to the Vietnamese Revolutionary League. Again we accepted the request but insisted that elections be held on January 6, 1946. The election process went smoothly in the North. In the South, the people were also very enthusiastic despite the backdrop of war.

On February 24, under the mediation of Xiao Wen, the three parties reached an agreement and formed the coalition government with Ho Chi Minh as President and Nguyen Hai Than as Vice-President, the Viet Minh and the Democratic Party being in control of four ministries, the Nationalist Party and the Vietnamese Revolutionary League in control of another four ministries, and persons without party affiliation looking after the Ministries of National Defence and the Interior.

On March 2, the First National Assembly was convened, at which 70 members from the Nationalist Party and the Vietnamese Revolutionary League were confirmed as deputies and the following was decided on.

1) Appointment of the Resistance Coalition Government, whose leading officials were as follows:

President	Ho Chi Minh
Vice-President	Nguyen Hai Than
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Nguyen Tuong Tam
Minister of Economic Affairs	Chu Ba Phuong
Minister of Public Health	Truong Dinh Tri
Minister of Education	Dang Thai Mai
Minister of Finance	Le Van Hien
Minister of Justice	Vu Dinh Hoe
Minister of Communications Engineering	Tran Dang Khoa
Minister of the Interior	Huynh Thuc Khang
Minister of National Defence	Phan Anh
Minister Without Portfolio	Bo Xuan Luat

2) Appointment of an Advisory Committee headed by the most competent adviser Vinh Thuy (i.e., Bao Dai).

3) Appointment of a nine-member Resistance Committee with Vo Nguyen Giap as Chairman and Vu Hong Khanh Vice-Chairman.

4) Appointment of a Standing Committee of the National Assembly with Nguyen Van To as Chairman. The members included Le Tu Lanh and Tran Tan Tho, who were of the Vietnamese Revolutionary League representatives whose selection had been approved by the National Assembly; they were not elected by the people.

Regardless of the concessions we had made for the sake of peace, Nguyen Hai Than and Vu Hong Khanh, under "Chiang's military umbrella", continued to oppose us openly. They set up loudspeakers in front of the Quan Thanh Temple near the Ho Tay Lake, attacking and slandering the Viet Minh from morning till night. On February 28, 1946, Chiang Kai-shek signed an agreement with France acknowledging France's sovereignty over Indo-China. Knowing nothing about this, the Nationalist Party stepped up their anti-Viet Minh activities in their stronghold at the Do Huu Vi Primary School. It was not until Chiang's troops withdrew that they vacated that place.

Those left behind surrendered to us, and we didn't blame them. Some of these people went south along with the French troops, who moved to areas south of the 17th parallel after the signing of the Geneva Agreement.

Why had Xiao Wen and Lu Han failed to implement Chongqing's order to "wipe out the Communists and capture Ho Chi Minh" with an army of 200,000 strong? The reason was that they knew clearly that Nguyen Hai Than and Vu Hong Khanh were bad characters and that Nghiem Ke To was a special agent of the Chongqing authorities, whose task was to monitor Xiao's and Lu's activities. A senior adviser to Zhang Fakui, Xiao Wen had made preparations for the Chinese troops to enter Viet Nam as early as in 1940-1941 but had not been trusted by Chiang Kai-shek who later sent the Yunnan troops to Viet Nam, thus making both Xiao and Zhang feel sullen. Furthermore, he began to hold President Ho in high esteem during the days of Ho's stay in Liuzhou. When Lu Han came to know that Chiang Kai-shek's scheme in sending the Yunnan troops to Viet Nam was to replace Long Yun and gain control of Yunnan, he was so resentful that he took a passive attitude towards that order.

But what was more important was that we had the support from the masses. When Chiang's troops were driving into Viet Nam, they met with resistance from the people along the way. If they had gone too far in their actions, the Viet Minh would have mobilized the masses in various places to hide the supplies and harden their resistance. Chiang's troops would then come up against more difficulties. And, if President Ho had been arrested, it would have aroused greater indignation from the people throughout the country, who would surely have risen up. If that happened, who could guarantee that Chiang Kai-shek would not put the blame on Xiao and Lu and punish them for default on their duty?

In spite of the fact that Chiang's troops committed a host of ignominious and repressive acts against the people, our cadres and masses, having absolute faith in President Ho, actively prepared for an armed struggle on the one hand and tried their best to diminish any possibility of provocations

fomented by the enemy on the other. I still remember the time when cadres in the Chem area disarmed a platoon of Lu Han's troops. On learning about this, President Ho sent Nguyen Duc Qui there, ordering the return of all the arms to the platoon and giving disciplinary sanction to the cadre who initiated this.

By relying on the masses, actively preparing for battle, remaining calm and patient in the face of enemy provocations, and trying to win over Xiao Wen and Lu Han, we succeeded in smashing Chiang Kai-shek's mad attempt to "wipe out the Communists and capture Ho Chi Minh". It should be said that at such a crucial time, without President Ho to "steer the ship through the rapids and around the dangerous shoals", it would have been impossible for us to defend our newly built political power or to maintain and build up our strength to cope with all the complications we were confronted with.

It was obvious by then that the struggle in the North against Chiang's forces had been crowned with victory. However, if President Ho had not won the respect of Zhang Fakui and Xiao Wen during his detention in Liuzhou and then been elected member of the Viet Cach Central Committee, regained his freedom and returned to Viet Nam, and laid the ideological groundwork for nationwide insurrections; and especially if Xiao Wen, after the August Revolution, had not acted as a mediator in the conflict between the Vietnamese Nationalist Party and the Vietnamese Revolutionary League and had not recognized the importance of having President Ho in the Coalition Government, then there would have been many more difficulties in the situation in Viet Nam. Therefore, an objective assessment must be made of the positive role played by Zhang Fakui and Xiao Wen in the Vietnamese revolution.

Here, I would like also to express my views on Chen Baocang, Director of the Jingxi Command Post of the Fourth War Zone. In 1941 Chen Baocang arrested me at the instigation of Nguyen Hai Than and Tran Bao. If he had treated me the way other reactionary Kuomintang members would have done, I would have been deprived of any opportunity to serve the revolution. However, he regarded me as one of the leaders of the Viet Minh and treated and looked after me very well

throughout my period of detention. At the end he gave me 500 yuan for travel expenses and had me accompanied to Liuzhou to be put under the custody of the Fourth War Zone. He never wrote his superiors any report unfavourable to me. He was also respectful to President Ho in Liuzhou. He mailed the poem written by President Ho to our comrades in Cao Bang, together with the one he himself had written in response to Ho's, and at the same time he sent us the message that President Ho had won freedom. All these facts demonstrated that Chen Baocang was an honest man of exceptional political calibre. I have learned recently that he had been accused of being "pro-Communist" and sentenced to death in Taiwan. It should be made clear that Chen Baocang was a progressive, patriotic democrat.

4. Dealing with the French army

Earlier, at the Tan Trao National Assembly President Ho raised the question of what should be done if the Allied Powers let France take over Indo-China. His conclusion was that we should hold talks with France and in order to do so successfully, we should proceed from a position of strength, which meant political power—independence—to be wrested from Japan, and, thus, we would be qualified to represent the newly independent country. His conclusion proved to be entirely correct. Shortly after he had been set free by Zhang Fakui and had returned to Viet Nam towards the end of 1944, he accompanied the American pilot to Kunming from Cao Bang and during his contacts with the U.S. Air Force Command, learned that the French army would soon take over Indo-China. On March 24, 1945, French Prime Minister De Gaulle's provisional government announced its intention to form a Federation of Indo-China composed of Bac Ky, Trung Ky, Nam Ky, Laos and Cambodia. That meant that the occupation of North Viet Nam by Chiang's troops was only temporary and that we had to tolerate it for the time being and make the best of the situation; from the long-term point of view, it was the French army that Viet Nam and the rest of

Indo-China had to deal with.

Through the mediation of the United States, France negotiated and reached an agreement with Chiang Kai-shek, which stipulated that Chiang's army would return to China and be replaced in Viet Nam by the French army. The real reason for this compromise was that, after Japan's surrender, the United States hoped that Chiang Kai-shek would concentrate all his troops on wiping out the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Liberation Army. Hence the need of an agreement to be reached between France and Chiang Kai-shek. On February 28, 1946 the agreement was signed between Chiang Kai-shek and France, with the Chiang side recognizing France's right of protectorate over Indo-China in exchange for the return of the French concessions in Shanghai, Hankou and Guangzhou as well as Guangzhou Bay to China and the sale of the Yunnan-Viet Nam Railway to China. The Chiang side pledged to withdraw the Chinese army from North Viet Nam before March 31, 1946, but it was not until May of that year that all Chiang's troops had stopped their looting and plundering and were finally withdrawn.

The development of events agreed with the prediction made by President Ho at the Tan Trao National Assembly, i.e., the French army would return to Indo-China, and our policy would be to enter into a dialogue with the French.

After several talks, President Ho signed on March 6, 1946 a preliminary agreement with Sainteny, the chief French representative in Hanoi. The agreement explicitly stipulated that France recognize the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam to be an independent state within the French Union, a state having its own government and national assembly and administering its own military and financial affairs; that France dispatch troops to North Viet Nam to replace Chiang's troops that were disarming the Japanese troops; that Viet Nam and France stop fighting in South Viet Nam in order for the two sides to continue their talks to solve the problems related to the diplomatic powers of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the economic and cultural rights and interests of France in Viet

Nam; and that reunification of the South and the North be decided on by the Vietnamese people themselves. An appendix to the agreement further stipulated that the number of French troops entering Viet Nam to replace Chiang's troops be 15,000 (at that time there were no longer any Vietnamese soldiers among the French army, but only soldiers of European or Filipino nationality), and that these French troops only be stationed in certain areas in the North designated by the Viet Nam side. The agreement also stated that the French troops would start to withdraw gradually from Viet Nam ten months after the agreement was signed and complete the withdrawal within five years.

The great significance of this preliminary agreement lay in the fact that France had to recognize the existence of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, that it could not send any troops into Viet Nam without the consent of the Democratic Republic, and that once in Viet Nam, these troops could only be stationed in areas designated by us.

Another great significance of the agreement was the entry of 15,000 French troops of European and Filipino nationalities in exchange for the withdrawal of the 200,000-strong Chiang army along with its lackeys Nguyen Hai Than and the Vietnamese Nationalist Party. Before the signing of the agreement, the armed forces of these lackeys had been harassing our areas. Now that they had lost their mainstay as a result of the withdrawal of Chiang's troops from Viet Nam, many of them, unable to get away, had to surrender to us or got killed.

We knew full well that France's objective in signing the agreement with us was to send troops into Viet Nam and then gradually expand its influence through military means, and finally overthrow our government and restore its rule throughout Indo-China. Yet we still signed the agreement so that Chiang's 200,000 troops would leave the North and so that we would have time to reorganize our forces in preparation for a war of resistance once France broke the agreement.

While negotiating the agreement with France, President Ho was working out a close-knit strategic plan. Those comrades

who had worked in the old base areas were to return there to prepare for fighting; Nguyen Luong Bang was to direct the work of dismantling machinery equipment and shipping it to Thai Nguyen in order to build up an arsenal; I was to go to the Fourth Joint Defence Zone to meet with Ho Tung Mau and Nguyen Chi Thanh to work out various plans and then to go to Thanh Hoa to discuss and decide on plans for setting up a base in the Nua area. In history, Na Son was the base from where Nguyen Hue advanced and defeated the invading army commanded by Sun Shiyi of the Manchus and recovered the town of Thang Long.

After signing the preliminary agreement, President Ho met with Dac-giang-li-o at Ha Long Gulf and reached the following agreement: The Vietnamese National Assembly would send a delegation to France while France would send a delegation to Viet Nam to negotiate with the Vietnamese Government in order to lay the ground for a formal agreement to be signed in Paris.

On April 16, 1946, the Delegation of the Vietnamese National Assembly headed by Pham Van Dong left for France.

On April 17, 1946, the Vietnamese Government Delegation headed by Vo Nguyen Giap held talks in Da Lat with a French delegation to draft the terms of the formal agreement which was to be signed in Paris. However, no agreement was ever reached due to the obstinate attitude held by the French side.

On May 30, 1946, President Ho left for Paris as honourable guest of the French Government to negotiate with the latter on the reunification of the South and North Viet Nam, the diplomatic rights of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam as well as the economic and cultural rights and interests of France in Viet Nam as embodied in the preliminary agreement.

On June 1, while President Ho was on his way to France, the High Commissioner of France in Saigon announced the founding of the Nam Ky Autonomous Republic and the names of the officials of the government:

Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior	Nguyen Van Thinhi
Deputy Prime Minister	Nguyen Van Xuan
Minister of Justice	Tran Van Trong
Minister of Finance	Nguyen Thanh Lap
Minister of Industry	Luu Van Lang
Minister of Agriculture, Trade and Technology	Ung Bao Toan
Minister of Education	Nguyen Thanh Giang
Minister of Social Labour	Khuong Huu Long

Formed at the same time was the Nam Ky Advisery Committee, a committee of 12 members, four of them French and the others Vietnamese-French.

On July 6, 1946, the Fontainebleau Conference was convened, at which the representative of our country sternly criticized the breach of the preliminary agreement by the French troops and strongly condemned the founding of the so-called Nam Ky Autonomous Republic.

On July 9 the second session adopted an agenda, according to which sessions would be held every Tuesday and Friday and four committees set up to discuss political, economic, military and diplomatic issues respectively.

On August 2, however, the French High Commissioner to Indo-China Dac-giang-li-o held in Da Lat a meeting attended by Saphung, representative from Laos, Chau Long, from Cambodia, and Nguyen Van Xuan, from the Nam Ky Autonomous Republic (the former Prime Minister Nguyen Van Thinh had committed suicide) to "determine the fundamental organizational principles of the Federation of Indo-China".

Our delegation to the Fontainebleau Conference promptly declared that if the French authorities in Nam Ky were entitled to determine the destiny of the countries in Indo-China, that would invalidate the preliminary agreement reached on March 6, 1946 and the Fontainebleau Conference would be meaningless. The delegation also announced its desire to suspend the Conference until the complications caused by the Conference at Da Lat was straightened out, and it ex-

pressed the hope that the Conference could be resumed in due course.

On August 14, 1946, the French Government set forth a draft statement in which it admitted that the March 6 agreement could serve as the basis for all discussions but at the same time it raised other issues connected with France's control of Viet Nam's political, economic, military and diplomatic affairs.

On August 18 our delegation made an item-by-item reply, which stated in unequivocal terms that Viet Nam enjoyed sovereignty in all domains and that the question of which country Nam Ky should belong to should be determined by the citizens in Nam Ky in a plebiscite. But the French side rejected all our proposals.

Our delegation issued a statement expressing regret over the fact that the Fontainebleau Conference had failed to achieve the desired goals and then left France for home. President Ho stayed behind to continue negotiations.

On September 14, 1946, President Ho signed on behalf of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam a provisional agreement (known as the September 14 Provisional Agreement) with Moutet, Minister of Colonies of the Provisional Government of the Republic of France, agreeing to resume the Fontainebleau Conference in January 1947.

President Ho returned home after signing the Provisional Agreement.

On October 28, 1946, the Second Session of the National Assembly of Viet Nam was convened which vested the government headed by President Ho with full powers to handle all matters and at the same time elected a Standing Committee to supervise the work of the government. The Committee was composed of 15 members with Bui Bang Doan serving as its Chairman and Ton Duc Thang and Pham Ba Truc, a Catholic, as Vice-Chairmen. As Bui Bang Doan did not attend the Session for health reasons, Ton Duc Thang was elected Acting Chairman. I was elected member of the Standing Committee.

On November 20, 1946, the French troops incited unrest

in Mong Cai, Tien Yen and Lang Son.

On November 21 the French troops created disturbances in Hai Phong.

On December 17 the French troops indulged in violence in Hang Bun and Hang Than streets and many other places in Hanoi.

On December 18 the French troops occupied the buildings of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Communications in Hanoi. At the same time, General Morlier, Commander of the French army, issued an ultimatum, demanding that our self-defence corps and public security forces lay down their arms.

The situation had reached a point that we had no other choice but to rise up and resist.

We decided to leave a regiment behind in Hanoi to defend the capital while President Ho and all the middle- and high-ranking cadres withdrew to Viet Bac. I was assigned to serve as Secretary of the Fourth Joint Defence Zone Party Committee, Chairman of the Viet Minh there and representative of the Central Government.

On December 19, 1946, President Ho called on the whole nation to rise up in resistance. The national war of resistance against France in this way began.

Conditions in the Fourth Joint Defence Zone were quite favourable. The French troops did not dare to invade Thanh Hoa, Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces, I co-operated closely with Ho Tung Mau, Nguyen Chi Thanh and other comrades of the Party committees of the Defence Zone and the provinces, and our work on various fronts proceeded smoothly. In March 1948 the Central Committee sent me to Thailand to fulfil a new task.

Part Five

THE NEW TASK—IMPROVING OVERSEAS WORK

(1948-1949)

In March 1948 Comrade Pham Ngoc Thach returned from Thailand to report on his work and conveyed to the Central Committee the suggestion made by the comrades working in Thailand that the Central Committee send me to Thailand to take charge of the work there.

It happened that I had just arrived in Viet Bac to seek instructions from President Ho and the Party Central Committee on preparations for the convocation of the Party Congress of the Fourth Joint Defence Zone.

That night President Ho, Truong Chinh, Pham Ngoc Thach and myself gathered by the fireside at President Ho's residence in a forested part of Viet Bac.

Pham Ngoc Thach said in his report that things in Thailand were moving along quite smoothly, but that since the overseas Vietnamese cadres were all on a par with each other in terms of their competence, it was difficult for anyone to give orders. Although there was a special representative office of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in Thailand, the comrades in charge of the work among overseas Vietnamese in northeast Thailand maintained no close contact with the office, giving it no active support. And comrades of the office, for their part, showed hardly any interest in the work. Pham Ngoc Thach also said that those comrades who had been working in

Thailand for years knew that I had been earlier responsible for the operations in Thailand. They proposed that President Ho and the Party Central Committee send me to Thailand to direct operations. They felt that I would be able to further unity among the cadres there and that, as a result, the work on all fronts would proceed more smoothly.

President Ho and Truong Chinh asked me what I thought of the idea and if, in fact, I could go there.

I answered that I would go if President Ho and the Party Central Committee were in favour of the proposal.

I returned to the Fourth Joint Defence Zone, and after the conclusion of the Party Congress of the Zone, I handed over the position of the Party committee secretary to Comrade Nguyen Chi Thanh and then went back to Viet Bac to make preparations to go to Thailand.

The task I was assigned was to serve as a representative of the Central Committee in giving overall guidance to work involving overseas Vietnamese in Thailand as well as to cadres working in Thailand, India, Burma, Czechoslovakia, France and other countries. President Ho himself appointed me special overseas representative of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and signed the certificate of appointment.

Around late May and early June of 1948, I went back to the Fourth Joint Defence Zone to visit my family for two days before setting off for Thailand.

I did not work for long in Thailand this time (1948-1949). Having gone through the days of the August Revolution under President Ho's direct guidance, I had already acquired some basic understanding of how to apply strategy and tactics so as to be able to deal with reactionaries and solve problems under severe conditions. Whether things were in a state of constant flux or were relatively stable, I tried my best to be a good helmsman and think independently. Under very hard and complicated conditions I did the following.

I. Improve the work with regard to the overseas Vietnamese residing in Thailand.

II. Improve the work of our representative offices in Bangkok and Rangoon.

III. Improve the work of assisting the revolution in Laos and Cambodia.

IV. Deal with the problems that arose on my way to Beijing.

I. Improving the Work with Regard to the Overseas Vietnamese Residing in Thailand

Before I get to the heart of the matter, I think it is necessary to say a few words about the process of the revolutionary activities conducted by the overseas Vietnamese in Thailand. The Communist Party of Siam (CPS) was founded in 1930. At that time, the overseas Vietnamese carried out activities under the direct leadership of the CPS. In 1938, the Siam Committee decided that the Siamese revolution should be carried out primarily by Siamese people and that foreigners should confine their activities to their own patriotic organizations. In 1941, a year after Japanese occupation of Viet Nam, the Viet Minh was founded. It called upon the whole nation to unite and fight Japan and France. Answering this call, the overseas Vietnamese in Thailand (by then Siam had been renamed Thailand) shifted the focus of their revolutionary activities towards Indo-China. They made contributions to the resistance movement against Japan and France for national salvation. However, the leading body of the then special committee remained more or less under the influence of the guiding thinking applied a few years earlier. Therefore, to improve the work related to the overseas Vietnamese had become a very urgent task.

For the first two days after my arrival in Thailand, I stayed in a small town called Bungcan situated by the Mekong River. Then the comrades took me to Uthen and Nakhon,

where I learned that Nguyen Duc Qui, the special representative to Bangkok sent by our government was in Ubon attending the inaugural ceremony for a newly built farm of the overseas Vietnamese. So I immediately rushed to Ubon to meet him.

When leading comrades in Ubon learned that I was a member of the Party Central Committee and a special representative sent abroad by the government, they wanted to give me a warm reception to show their respect for me. But I suggested that they make arrangements for me to stay in an ordinary resident's house so as not to reveal my true identity and that I attend the inaugural ceremony as an ordinary cadre.

Nguyen Duc Qui reported to me on the work in Thailand. At the time Luang Phibunsongkhram was already in power in Thailand, and conditions became unfavourable for the overseas Vietnamese to engage in patriotic activities.

In both his appointment for me and his talk with me before my departure, President Ho's idea was that I was to become the representative to Thailand and that Nguyen Duc Qui was to be recalled to take up another post. But after I heard Nguyen's report, I pondered the matter over and thought that it would be better for Nguyen to remain in his post. Under the circumstances prevailing then, any sudden replacement could be utilized by the Thai authorities as an excuse for denying recognition to our representative since Thailand had not officially recognized Ho Chi Minh's government.

I consulted with Nguyen Duc Qui and asked him to remain at his post as the special representative of our government. I would stay at the back and would be responsible for the line, principles and work of the Party. I would assist him in performing his functions as representative of Viet Nam as well as of the overseas Vietnamese.

The inaugural ceremony of the Ubon farm was really grand. At first, when the overseas Vietnamese were evacuated from Laos to Thailand, Pridi's government had provided enormous assistance and allotted them pieces of land for setting up farms. In those years when conditions were favourable, cadres of the Overseas Vietnamese Federation for National Salvation

arranged for the evacuated overseas Vietnamese to build houses on an open ground, distributing a piece of land the same size to each household, which they could till themselves. Production was conducted on a household basis, and the houses were built in the same style and the layout was orderly, so the whole place looked very much like a collective farm. All the cadres and overseas compatriots proudly called it "Farm". And the Thais called it the "Vietnamese Farm".

I highly appreciated the cadres' efforts in looking after the livelihood of the overseas compatriots, but I pointed out that it was not worthy of the name and that it was not good politically to call it a "farm", for Luang Phibunsongkhram's government might start having misgivings because the word "farm" had revolutionary connotations for the Thai people, and that might create trouble for our future activities. I proposed to Nguyen Duc Qui that the word "farm" should be changed and that we should let the Thais see that it was no more than a village made up of Vietnamese refugees from Laos.

The issue of the Ubon "farm" was only an example of the problems. After more investigation and study, I realized that our work in general should be rectified.

Having stayed a few days in Ubon and exchanged views with Nguyen Duc Qui, I went to Udon to meet with the leading members of the special committee of the overseas Vietnamese and the Overseas Vietnamese Federation for National Salvation.

On my way from Bungcan to Nakhon, Ubon and Udon, what I saw and heard and learned from reports made by local leading comrades gave me the impression that since the war of resistance, our cadres and overseas compatriots had done a lot of work and had displayed a spirit of patriotism and unity, winning wide admiration from the Thai people. But due to the favourable political climate of the previous years, they had adopted some working methods that did not suit the refugees' situation. After the coup d'état staged by Luang Phibunsong-

khram, the situation took a turn for the worse. But they failed to realize the need of a drastic change in their work methods. It was true that they did draw in their horns, but subjective and rigid practices were still prevalent. If not checked promptly, such practices would endanger the patriotic movement of the overseas Vietnamese.

What merited our attention was that our people, though carrying out activities in Thailand, didn't read Thai newspapers to ascertain the political attitude of the Thai authorities. In Udon, I came across a few Thai newspapers carrying news slandering the overseas Vietnamese by accusing them of violating public security regulations and committing robbery and arson. Obviously, these newspapers were trying to create a climate of public opinion for repression of the overseas Vietnamese.

I decided with the special committee to call an enlarged meeting of the leading members of the Party branches and branches of the Overseas Vietnamese Federation for National Salvation in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the situation and to work out long-term guiding principles for work of the overseas Vietnamese.

The meeting which began on August 15, 1948, lasted for three days.

At the meeting the special committee and representatives from various places reported on their work. The patriotic activities of the overseas Vietnamese were summed up as follows.

In March 1946 many overseas Vietnamese fled from Laos to Thailand, bringing the total number of the overseas Vietnamese in Thailand from 40,000 or 50,000 to between 90,000 and 100,000. The life of these overseas Vietnamese refugees soon became stable with the all-out help of the overseas Vietnamese, the Thai people, and the then progressive Thai government. In 1946, the special committee and the overseas Vietnamese organized the Tran Phu Brigade to return to Viet Nam and participate in the war of resistance in Num Bo (the south part of Viet Nam). And in 1947 they helped to form the

First and Second Cuu Long Brigades which were armed and sent to Viet Nam. After the outbreak of the national war of resistance, thousands of young overseas Vietnamese joined the army and went to the battle front in Laos and Cambodia to assist these two friendly neighbours in their war against French aggression. The territory of Thailand became the rear area of the "west front". In many provinces bordering on Laos and Cambodia, training and arms repairing centres were set up for the "west front". Headquarters of special zones were established inside Thailand, and those who participated in the war in Laos and Cambodia often came to Thailand to rest. In 1946 and 1947, the Pridi government warmly supported our war of resistance, helping the overseas Vietnamese who had fled to Thailand to make a living and providing them with weapons. It also gave tacit approval to the overseas Vietnamese in their patriotic activities in Thailand.

It was under such favourable conditions that our cadres and overseas compatriots became a little subjective, carrying out some activities that violated the sovereignty of the country of their residence without realizing it. For instance, in many places they hung the Vietnamese gold-star red flag, and our army commanders and fighters went about freely inside Thailand with weapons. When Tran Van Giau went from Bangkok to northeast Thailand to see the overseas Vietnamese there, a procession of armed overseas Vietnamese was organized at the welcoming ceremony. Some cadres made it known that they were Communists. Communist documents, books and newspapers were on display in the office of the Overseas Vietnamese Federation for National Salvation and sold at the Thaimay Bookstore. Even the name of this bookstore itself, which meant "new Thailand" or "new Thai", showed a lack of political circumspection.

Our cadres and overseas compatriots were filled with patriotic enthusiasm and felt very proud of their sacred national war of resistance and of their great leader. However, they lacked a complete understanding of the arena of their activities and their own political status.

At the enlarged meeting of the special committee, I put forward a few questions for discussion and expressed my views, the main points of which were as follows:

First, I spoke about the strategic position of Thailand as was located where it was geographically.

Since the founding of our Party, the Party organization of the overseas Vietnamese in Thailand had made important contributions, especially in the work during the days of the Department for Aiding Indo-China after the failure of the Soviet movement in Nghe Tinh and then in 1945 when it organized the overseas Vietnamese in Thailand and Laos to participate in the revolution in Laos. Now that our war of resistance was in a difficult period and we were surrounded from all sides, the Party organization of the overseas Vietnamese in Thailand had a very important role to play. With the overseas Vietnamese' long revolutionary tradition and extensive mass organizations, and with the assistance in the patriotic movement given by the progressive Thai government a few years before, Thailand had become the only corridor linking Viet Nam and the rest of Indo-China with the outside world. In order to keep contacts with all the fraternal Parties and the socialist and people's democratic camp, this corridor had to be protected. And in order to win international support and acquaint the people of France and other countries with the just struggle of Viet Nam against the crimes of aggression committed by French imperialists, this corridor, too, had to be protected by all possible means. It was all the more necessary to safeguard this corridor for continuous supply of arms and other necessary materials to the war of resistance inside Viet Nam. Therefore, at that time, Thailand held an extremely important strategic position in the revolutionary cause in Viet Nam and in Indo-China as a whole. It was precisely because of this that every cadre, Party member and overseas compatriot was duty-bound to do his best in Thailand.

Then, I dealt with the political status of the overseas Vietnamese and the good-neighbour policy for relations be-

tween the Vietnamese and Thai peoples.

To shoulder the heavy task in this strategically important place, all cadres and Party members, first of all, had to realize that we ourselves and our overseas compatriots were but residents in a foreign country. As such, we had to respect the laws and customs and habits of the country we were residing, no matter how favourable the conditions were for our activities. In previous years, with the help of the progressive Thai government and people, the overseas compatriots had done a lot of work. But our cadres and overseas compatriots often ignored the necessity of respecting their laws and customs and habits. Some of the forms of activities which we adopted between 1946 and 1947 were not appropriate. For example, hanging gold-star red flags everywhere. According to international law, a country could have its national flag hang only in its own representative office. Our troops stationed inside Thailand were carrying out training and had set up an arsenal there. This could be done only when the progressive Thai government was very sympathetic towards and supported our revolution. And it should have been done in a covert way. Yet our cadres coming to Thailand from the "west front" carried weapons in public and even asked soldiers to give them a gun salute, and so on and so forth. They were so careless that they didn't realize that they were going against international norms of conduct among nations.

In the past the progressive Thai government and people had full understanding of us and tacitly approved of our doings. However, the above-mentioned unscrupulous behaviour had already aroused enough animosity among people who might later make use of it to provoke incidents and, thus, sabotage the friendship between Viet Nam and Thailand.

True, after the reactionaries came into power in the wake of the coup that took place in Thailand in November 1947, our people became aware of the need to be prudent in their actions, but they were still on the subjective side and too revealing and might bring about unfortunate consequences. So it was high time to put an end to these improper activities.

To stop being too revealing and avoid provocation was only one aspect of the question. At the same time we had to cope with the pressure exerted by the Thai reactionary forces by trying to win the sympathy of the Thai people. This was the only fundamental long-term course of action we had to adopt. President Ho had urged our cadres and overseas compatriots to maintain contact with the Thai people and make friends with them. Venerable Co Di had set an example in this regard by his own deeds and asked our overseas compatriots to do as they had been bidden by President Ho. Now that our people had won victory in the Vietnamese revolution and were in power, it was all the more necessary for us to enhance Viet Nam-Thailand friendship. On the one hand it was essential for us to live in perfect harmony with the Thai people and respect Thai laws, customs and habits. On the other hand, we had to work among the Thai people, explaining to them that the war of resistance waged by Viet Nam was a just war, so that they would sympathize with and protect the patriotic activities of the overseas Vietnamese and oppose persecution and suppression by the Thai government. We not only had to try to win sympathy from the working people but also from the people of the upper strata and government officials as well. Although the Thai authorities had gained control over the central government, its control had not reached all localities. If local officials had sympathy for the patriotic activities of our overseas compatriots, that would be of great help to us.

After major policies were determined, I put forward some concrete measures for the participants to discuss. Some people maintained that though Luang Phibunsongkhram was anti-Communist, he was too busy coping with internal affairs and getting rid of his domestic opponents to have a free hand to suppress the overseas Vietnamese. This notion was utterly wrong. It might lead to subjectivism and put people off their guard. Everyday we could read in the newspapers that the Thai government was making use of the media to prepare to suppress the overseas Vietnamese. We had to lose no time to work

out counter-measures.

While immediately halting those unrestrained activities that were conducted just for going through the motions, we had to keep up and promote the patriotic spirit of the overseas Vietnamese. The gold-star red flag and the portrait of President Ho were sacred symbols for our compatriots, and therefore it would not do to remove them totally. In order to avoid trouble, we had to persuade our compatriots to hang the flag and portrait only at home and display them so that they looked like an altar symbolizing the Fatherland. Should anyone try to interfere, we could explain that it was a popular custom and, in this way, protect our right to love our Fatherland.

Our cadres and overseas compatriots needed to gain permission from the Thai authorities to move about freely in different parts of Thailand. Previously, the special committee was opposed to the overseas compatriots' holding foreign resident certificates that enabled them to move about freely inside Thailand. It was afraid that once they received those certificates, they would lose their status of war refugees. This was a wrong proposition, because without such certificates our cadres and our compatriots could not travel about or do business in different parts of the country. Although one had to pay several hundred baht to get the certificate, this would give our cadres and overseas compatriots a legitimate status for travelling, doing business and carrying out patriotic activities.

Although it was most important and urgent to acquire legal status, the most essential thing for us to do was to try hard to consolidate unity among the overseas compatriots and enhance their combat strength. Our organizations needed to be solid and tight and kept underground. Although up to now the Thai authorities still allowed the Overseas Vietnamese Federation for National Salvation to operate, we had to see that it might be banned someday. Therefore, we had to be prepared to turn it into a neutral organization called Overseas Vietnamese Relief Association to avoid being landed in a passive position. The number of full-time cadres had to be held to the minimum. Members of the Party and cadres of the Overseas

Vietnamese Federation for National Salvation had to be one with the masses and rely on them, and seek a livelihood and live just like overseas residents in order to keep the Thais from thinking that they were engaged in political activities.

A good job had to be done in maintaining secrecy by relying on the overseas compatriots. Both in his daily life and in his routine work, every cadre had to strictly abide by our security regulations. We discussed and adopted some concrete measures: it was forbidden to keep weapons, army uniforms and "red" books and papers in workplaces or at home; commanders and fighters coming from the "west front" were not allowed to go about among the overseas compatriots in army uniforms or with weapons as they had before; and cadres were not allowed to go about with political documents on them, thus offering no evidence to the police in case they were arrested. All our offices and cadres had to implement the abovementioned regulations within five days. Any arrests resulting from violation of these regulations would cause damage to the revolution and therefore would be regarded as criminal action against our people and Fatherland.

In discussing the guidelines and various measures, the participants talked about the concrete activities in their own localities. The leading member of the Nakhon Branch of the Overseas Vietnamese Federation for National Salvation said that the Vietnamese residents in his locality were preparing a spectacular torch parade to celebrate the victory in the August 19th General Insurrection. At the meeting it was decided that he go back immediately to Nakhon to call off this activity.

When various problems were solved at this enlarged meeting, I talked with some cadres and backbone Party members, further explaining that the duty of the leading bodies of the Party was to guarantee the implementation of all the resolutions. The participants gave a positive assessment of the meeting, saying that the meeting had helped the cadres and Party members to deepen their understanding of their own responsibilities and duties as well as of the guidelines for work.

I remained in Udon to know more about things there. Around late August, some comrades reported that in some places the residences of our cadres and the offices of the Overseas Vietnamese Federation for National Salvation had been searched, and that Thai policemen had made a body search of overseas Vietnamese at checkposts in Udon and had not found any incriminating documents or weapons. This showed that cadres in various places were strictly implementing the decisions of the meeting.

The guidelines adopted at the meeting held in Udon in August 1948 became the ideological basis for expanding patriotic activities of the overseas Vietnamese as well as for cementing solidarity among them. In fact, the main cause for the disputes that had occurred among some principal leaders some time before was the lack of a harmonious style of work. In the absence of clear-cut guidelines, minor differences could lead to contradictions and impair unity. Once the guidelines were laid down, differences would disappear.

In my talks with the principal cadres, I pointed out to them the mistake they had made of not giving active support to the government's representative office in Bangkok. Probably some of the comrades there were not strict enough in their daily life and behaviour, but that was not a question involving political principle. I did a lot of persuasion among the comrades in charge of work among our overseas compatriots in northeast Thailand, explaining to them the need to continue to share weal and woe with other comrades as they had done before winning complete victory in the revolution and coming to power. They were right to have expected those comrades who served as representatives of our country to maintain dignity. However, when we supported their work out of consideration for the interests of the nation and the revolution, we were not necessarily supporting them as individuals. As it was inevitable for people to make mistakes in their daily life, we had to criticize them and help them to correct their mistakes. However, we could not lump together our complaints about some individuals and our support for the activities of the

representative's office of our country. Particularly, the Thai government and people would be impressed by the support our overseas Vietnamese provided to the representative of their Fatherland.

After those few comrades who were prejudiced against people working at the representative office of our government in Bangkok clearly understood the political significance of this fundamental question, they changed their attitude. Mutual relations improved considerably.

II. Improving the Work of Our Representative Offices in Bangkok and Rangoon

I left Udon and went to a few places to see how resolutions of the meeting were being implemented and visit a few families that supported our revolution, and then I went to Bangkok.

At that time there were in Bangkok a representative office of our government, the Viet Nam News Agency Branch, and a secret purchasing outfit directly under the Nam. Bo Resistance Committee.

From 1946 through 1948, our comrades working here made their contributions to the cause of the war of resistance at home and to the propaganda work abroad. But generally speaking, their work was quite limited in scope, and their office was in disorder.

Usually, a country's agency abroad was in control of all of its country's activities there so as to keep abreast of new developments and exercise unified leadership. However, the representative office of our country in Bangkok was only in charge of foreign affairs. It showed no interest in the work in other fields and was incompetent to solve any problems.

Therefore, to rectify the work of this office, it was first of all necessary to reshuffle the office so as to guarantee closer ties between it and the other offices in Thailand, such as the office in charge of work among the overseas Vietnamese, the

West Front Office and the Logistics Office. Only thus could our work be carried out smoothly.

I discussed this view of mine with Nguyen Duc Qui and members of the special committee. They all agreed that this idea was reasonable and feasible. After that, we submitted to the Central Committee a report on setting up a central council of cadres abroad to be in charge of overall leadership of our work in Thailand, which included:

1. To organize and mobilize the overseas Vietnamese in Thailand to strengthen unity, love the country, support the war of resistance and defend the "corridor" connecting Viet Nam and the rest of Indo-China with the outside world during the anti-French war.

2. To improve our work in assisting Laos and Cambodia from the west.

3. To provide guidance for the supply of materials to the Fatherland. Previously this work was done separately, and the comrades concerned did not take part in the activities of local Party organizations. Now this work would be placed under the leadership of the Central Council of Cadres Abroad.

4. To direct work relating to foreign affairs, including international propaganda and the activities of our agencies in Thailand and Burma.

5. To maintain contact with our cadres working in France, Czechoslovakia and other countries and direct their work.

I myself would assume the post of secretary of the Central Council of Cadres Abroad, Nguyen Duc Qui would serve as its deputy secretary and heads of various offices as members—for instance, Hong and Song Tung from the special committee of the overseas Vietnamese; Khanh and Binh from the west front command; and Cao Hong Lanh and Dung Van Phuc from the department for domestic material supplies.

Shortly after the Central Council of Cadres Abroad was set up with the approval of the Central Committee and when it was about to call a meeting to discuss ways of improving the

work of our representative office in Bangkok, Le Hy left his post without authorization, and nobody knew his whereabouts. He had previously worked in South Viet Nam, and come to Thailand after the outbreak of the war of resistance to take charge of the branch of the Viet Nam News Agency that was under the government representative office.

Because of his work, Le Hy had frequent contacts with the Soviet Embassy in Bangkok. The Soviet comrades, knowing how difficult things might be for us working in a capitalist country, usually would exempt us from going through the formalities in certain matters and would be ready to help us if we made a verbal request.

Around September 1948 when Nguyen Duc Qui who had left for the northeast, Le Hy, taking advantage of Nguyen's absence and his own position, lied to the Soviet Embassy that our Party was going to send him to Moscow to distribute Vietnamese news bulletins. The Soviet Embassy immediately helped him to complete the relevant procedures for the trip.

Le Hy had left Thailand for quite some time, but our comrades at the government representative office and the Viet Nam News Agency knew nothing about it. After Nguyen Duc Qui returned to Bangkok from the northeast, the Thai police inquired where Le had been, and he could not but say that he had no idea about it.

After I arrived in Bangkok and heard the report from Nguyen Duc Qui, I said that there were two possibilities: either Le Hy had been arrested by the Thai police and now they pretended that they didn't know what had become of him; or seeing that the situation was deteriorating, he had deserted his mission and hidden somewhere in Thailand.

Our comrades were kept on tenterhooks until a month later when the Soviet Embassy informed them that Le Hy had arrived in Moscow safely. They failed to perceive the serious nature of this violation of organizational discipline. When Le left, he took an Australian along with him. It was said that this Australian was a member of the Australian Communist Party and had been invited by Pham Ngoc Thach from Singapore to

work as an English translator at the Bangkok Branch of the Viet Nam News Agency.

I pointed it out to Nguyen Duc Qui that Le Hy was contravening the principle by leaving his post without authorization. He had done so not just out of fear of the deteriorating situation: there might have been a political reason as well. Therefore, some immediate measures had to be taken to prevent any undesirable consequences. If the Thai authorities questioned about him again, Nguyen Duc Qui might tell them that Le Hy had gone to the provinces to visit overseas Vietnamese or to take care of personal matters, and that because we were not in Bangkok at that time, we were not clear about his whereabouts although it was possible that we might hear of him a few days later. At the same time, we had to inform the Soviet Embassy that Le Hy's trip was in violation of organizational discipline and that our representative office in Bangkok had been completely unaware of his trip beforehand. We had to advise the Embassy to report the matter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Government so as to avoid their misunderstanding of our Party and government and to prevent Le Hy from doing anything in violation of principle in Moscow.

Later we learned that Le Hy had been influenced by the erroneous ideas of Tran Ngoc Danh, our government representative in France.

Both Tran and Le were Party cadres, divorced from domestic revolutionary practice. They had read many theoretical books without digesting them properly, which led them to make mistakes. They did not understand why our Party, being already in power, could confine itself to winning national independence and unity, instead of carrying out agrarian reform immediately or putting forward policies to curb capitalism at home, or openly opposing U.S. imperialism as the Parties in the Soviet Union, China and other East European countries had been doing. They did not see that in 1945 and 1946 the Vietnamese revolutionary regime was still in its initial phase and that it had to deal with antagonistic forces both at

home and abroad. President Ho and the Party Central Committee applied flexible strategies to win over friends, make fewer enemies and to do our best to avoid attacks from our enemies, so as to concentrate our efforts on dealing with our Number One enemy—the French imperialist aggressors.

To misunderstand the Party's line was hazardous enough. But Tran in France and Le in Thailand went even farther, they contacted each other secretly, exchanged misgivings about and ideas against the Party and made appointment to meet in the Soviet Union or an East European country to slander our Party. When Le Hy was about to leave Bangkok, Tran Ngoc Danh presumptuously announced the dissolution of the representative office of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in France before he fled to Czechoslovakia.

Le Hy thought that nothing would happen to him once he succeeded in deceiving the Soviet ambassador in Bangkok. So, to his surprise, he was not allowed to continue to remain in Moscow after the Soviet Government learned of his violation of the organizational discipline. So he had to go to Czechoslovakia. There he collaborated with Tran Ngoc Danh in trying to rope in the Vietnamese representatives in the International Youth Organization and Trade Union Organization in Prague. But they were rejected squarely by these representatives.

It was not until the end of 1949 when I stopped over in Prague that I had a chance to criticize Tran and Le.

Le Hy's unauthorized trip to Moscow was a very serious matter and, in a way, it manifested that our work system was slack in Bangkok at that time. Some of the cadres in charge of work concerning foreign affairs were not strict enough in their daily lives. One of them, impressed by the fact that Pridi had socialist ideas and warmly supported Viet Nam's war of resistance, made it known in public that he was a Communist and gave lectures on Marxism and socialism wherever he went. His actions yielded opposite results. For instance, some Thai, Malay and Burmese Communists doubted whether he was a true Communist, while many petty-bourgeois intellectuals mistook

him for a principal leader of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party. The Thai reactionary government kept a close watch on him and was ready at any time to arrest him.

After the Party Central Committee received a report on this, it decided to recall him immediately. In order to avoid trouble I did a lot of persuasion before I succeeded in sending him back, for the political situation in Thailand continued to deteriorate.

At that time our comrades in Bangkok did a lot of work in relation to other countries as well as international propaganda. For instance, they set up the special representative office of the Vietnamese government in Burma with Tran Van Luan in charge, promoted diplomatic relations with the embassies of the Soviet Union, India, Burma, Pakistan and Indonesia in Bangkok, established contact with such permanent international organizations in Prague as the International Youth Federation and the International Federation of Trade Unions, and the Bangkok Branch of the Viet Nam News Agency published and distributed worldwide the English version of *Viet Nam News*.

However, their work still left something to be desired, such as they were guilty of boastfulness, exaggeration and rigidness.

Our comrades set up an office in Bangkok called the International Liaison Office of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. This office established wide contacts with people from all walks of life and was very active. Some newspapers in the West were spreading the notion that it was an office of the Cominform in Southeast Asia. I proposed disbanding the Liaison Office and transferring the cadres to Bangkok and Rangoon to strengthen our work relating to foreign countries and publicity there. We had to do more practical work so as to avoid suspicion on the part of the reactionary Thai authorities.

The representative office of our government in Bangkok was in a great mess and did not look like a representative office at all. The staff members were sloppily dressed and too casual in comportment. I talked with them, suggesting that they rent a villa so as to separate the government representative office

from the propaganda office, that they cultivate a life-style characterized by equality and friendship, seriousness and sincerity, and that everyone of them do his work with revolutionary zeal, so that the office could become a state organ with high standards of discipline. After that, the representative office found a rather magnificent building on Sathon Street which could accommodate a few dozen people. With its spacious, tree-shaded garden, it looked just like a representative office of a government. And our staff lived and worked in a way much better than before.

In Rangoon, the office of our special representative Tran Van Luan was even shabbier than the former representative office in Bangkok. Whenever the representative of the Vietnamese government was invited to banquets, Tran Van Luan and his wife had to go on a tricycle. In order to avoid embarrassment, they would ask the driver to drop them half a kilometre away from the banquet place and then walk there.

In those days funds for our activities abroad were really meagre. Overseas compatriots in various places actively made donations, but the money collected did not amount to much. And it was more difficult to rely on government funding. However, this state of affairs in our diplomatic work had to change. I suggested to the Central Council of Cadres Abroad that it approve the purchase of a sedan car for our representative office in Rangoon.

At the end of 1948 and beginning of 1949, the Central Council of Cadres Abroad held a conference in Bangkok to discuss diplomatic activities and international propaganda work. The conference was attended by cadres engaged in foreign affairs, among whom was our representative in Rangoon Tran Van Luan.

The participants raised a lot of questions, and I availed myself of this opportunity to express my views on the principles governing our work in foreign affairs.

In our relations with other countries the most important thing was to uphold and carry out the line and policies of our

government. In our contacts with foreigners, our cadres engaged in foreign affairs had always to adhere to principles, oppose any form of liberalism and any violations of the line and policies of our government. Any violations of our principles would harm the interest of our country. (As our Party was still operating underground in Thailand, I did not bring up any questions regarding the Party at this conference, because some of the participants were not Party members.)

Some comrades were concerned only with the dress, social discourse and manners needed to get along with people. True, these things were important, but the most essential was to safeguard our national dignity, giving no cause to anybody to look down upon or misunderstand our country. Therefore, while we had to pay great attention to practising economy and strict budgeting, we had to behave the way government representatives were expected to. Diplomatic cadres had to be exceptionally serious and honest and upright.

I also elaborated on people's diplomacy. No matter in what country we were working, our diplomatic work was aimed at winning the sympathy and support of the people of that country for our war of resistance against France. Diplomatic work had to be done not only by our diplomats, the overseas Vietnamese also had to be encouraged to participate in people-to-people diplomacy. People-to-people diplomacy was all the more important now that not a single country in the world had recognized our resistance government. (In 1948 and 1949 the Soviet Union and the East European countries had not yet recognized our government, and China had not yet won nationwide victory.)

In the service of people-to-people diplomacy, our international propaganda work in Bangkok improved. The Thai version of the *Viet Nam News* was published at the end of 1948, and it was quite popular among the Thai monks and priests and intellectuals, because its contents were well suited to local conditions. In 1949, to enable the Thai people to know more about our beloved national leader, we had *Anecdotes of President Ho* translated into Thai and published with a preface

written by a Thai.

Viewed as a whole, the things I did in Bangkok all involved changes in our style of work, with the aim of protecting the legal status and dignity of our offices abroad and enabling our cadres to constantly maintain vigilance against any possible provocation and sabotage by reactionary forces and adopt a cautious and careful approach towards work.

III. Improving the Work of Assisting the Revolution in Laos and Cambodia

Aiding the revolution in Laos and Cambodia was an important task of the Central Council of Cadres Abroad, which the Special Committee of Overseas Vietnamese residing in northeast Thailand and the leading comrades in Bangkok had been engaged in for a long time. Since the outbreak of a full-scale anti-French war, the Party Central Committee ordered the Party organizations of the Vietnamese residing in Thailand to give effective support to the front in Laos and Cambodia in the west. Therefore, the comrades there established a West Front Military Commission with Vu Huu Binh in charge of military operations and Tran Van Giau and Le Huu Quan in charge of political affairs, and Xo, Khanh and Cung as members.

From 1946 through 1948, they divided the entire west front into five special zones which covered the areas from Upper Laos to northwestern Cambodia. Most overseas Vietnamese cadres were transferred to this front and several millions of dong contributed by the overseas Vietnamese were mostly spent there.

The comrades working in Bangkok often provided political and material support to the members of the Itsala government of Laos who were in exile in Thailand. But our financial resources were limited. Aware of this, the French and American spies tried hard to "buy" over those people, with the result that these people gradually split up. Failing to stand the

hardship and understand the protractedness of the war of resistance, Catay, Khammao and Souvanna Phouma returned to Laos one after another. Catay even turned into a henchman of French aggressors in their suppression of the anti-French resistance movement. Only Prince Souphanouvong upheld the just cause, uniting with the Laotian cadres and masses in Thailand and maintaining close ties with the Vietnamese comrades. He had some misgivings for a while, but in due course he cleared them up and regained his confidence and was resolved to carry on the struggle to the end. At this time, in Upper, Middle and Lower Laos there were a number of people, such as Xithon Camadam, Singapor and Phumi Vongvichit, who took an active part in the anti-French war and maintained close ties with us.

In order to help Cambodia, our comrades in Bangkok established contact with some Khmers, who were fighting against French aggressors, and discussed with them about setting up a Khmer National Liberation Committee. After its establishment this Committee organized some armed forces and sent them back to operate in areas around the Tonlesap Lake and Battambang Province as well as the northwest frontiers of Cambodia. Later, their internal strife led to armed conflicts, and some even looted and harassed the local people.

Several other armed units formed by Vietnamese residing in Thailand also marched to Cambodia to wage battles there. After building a base area in the Dangrek Mountains in the border area between Cambodia and Thailand, they went to places where there were Vietnamese in order to conduct propaganda and agitate. Later, they established contact with the Khmer Council of Cadres, which was under the direct leadership of the South Viet Nam Resistance Committee.

When I went to Bangkok to help form the Central Council of Cadres Abroad, we were in the middle of assisting Laos and Cambodia in their resistance to France. Our cadres and compatriots had made tremendous efforts in this area. With ardent revolutionary zeal, they fought under extremely difficult conditions on the west front. However, there were not a

few problems there.

One day, Nguyen Duc Qui told me that Prince Souphanouvong wanted to leave Bangkok. This was a matter of political significance. He had been consistent in fighting against the French and had maintained close ties with us. But why this sudden change?

After investigation, we learned that this had to do with our comrades in Laos, who had done things in disregard of political consequences. The most serious thing was that some of our soldiers in Lower Laos took away the weapons of the Laotian troops, believing that they could better use these weapons. This event caused a serious trouble. According to Nguyen Dinh Hin, Prince Souphanouvong was very unhappy with this and other similar actions which shook his trust in our support.

We understood Prince Souphanouvong's dissatisfaction and believed that he was different in nature from those who had run away from the resistance movement and returned to Laos. What we worried about was that there might be some force which was trying to win him over, or that he was seeking assistance from other sources than Viet Nam. This force might be the "Free Thailand" group that had already had legal status in the areas inhabited by Laotian people in Thailand. Still worse, the United States might possibly try to find a trump card available for it to meddle in the Indo-China issue. Anyway, it was most important for us to win back Prince Souphanouvong's trust in us.

After consulting with Nguyen Duc Qui, I decided to go to see Prince Souphanouvong right away. We planned to give him a warm farewell banquet at which we would explain two things to him.

First, Nguyen Duc Qui, on behalf of the Vietnamese comrades in Thailand, would sincerely admit to the Prince that what Vietnamese volunteers had done in Lower Laos was wrong, that we felt deeply aggrieved about it, and that the people who had made the mistake had been severely criticized and had been ordered to give those weapons back to the

Laotian troops.

Second, we would let the Prince know that we were willing to help him on his trip. At the same time we would make it clear to him that the persons who had invited him to go on this trip were insincere to the Laotian people and to their anti-French war for winning the independence of their own country. Now that Viet Nam and Laos were faced with a common enemy—the French imperialist aggressors, co-operation was the most reliable way of resisting the French aggressors. In the course of co-ordinated operations, lower-level cadres might make mistakes sometimes, but President Ho and the Vietnamese government were sincere and consistent in their policies and line of helping the Laotian revolution. If the Prince wanted to leave Thailand for the time being, we were willing to buy him air tickets and send a cadre to accompany him. Moreover, if the Prince ran into difficulties in future, we would welcome him back to make plans with us for the great resistance cause our two nations were involved in.

Prince Souphanouvong went to Muongloi and stayed there for a while. Through contacts and investigations, he came to see that the people who had invited him were not sincere in helping the Laotian revolution. Hence he returned to Bangkok and got in touch with us again and set to organize Laotian armed forces to resist the French. Shortly afterwards, he returned to Laos, where he co-operated closely with the Vietnamese cadres and the Laotian comrades in forming the Pathet Lao resistance forces, which carried the struggle against the French aggressors to final victory.

Having solved such problems as Prince Souphanouvong's desire to leave Bangkok, I went on to acquaint myself with our entire work of helping the revolution in Laos and Cambodia. I met with leading cadres from various special zones to hear their reports about their work and to know the difficulties they met and the problems they had to tackle. Towards the end of 1948, the Central Council of Cadres Abroad held a meeting of cadres from the west front to analyse the strengths and weak-

nesses in the effort to assist the revolution in Laos and Cambodia.

The meeting lauded the gigantic efforts made by the overseas Vietnamese cadres and fighters in various special zones, who had devoted themselves to the revolutionary cause of Laos, Cambodia and Viet Nam, enduring all kinds of difficulties and hardships. At the same time, the participants summed up some existing problems.

1. Our understanding of how to help our friendly neighbours was not entirely correct. While giving help to them, we actually placed lopsided stress on the work of our own country. Our comrades had often ignored the task of helping mobilize and organize the masses, build base areas and train troops and cadres for these two friendly nations.

2. We had emphasized military affairs to the neglect of political affairs. In doing propaganda work among the masses, we focused on gaining a foothold for ourselves in the struggle against the enemy, instead of on mobilizing the Laotian and Cambodian people and helping them to establish grass-roots organizations.

3. Some comrades harboured ultra-Left ideas and mechanically applied the experience we had gained in Viet Nam to their work in Laos and Cambodia. For instance, they helped to set up "people's committees" and had the Viet Minh's programmes and its relevant rules and regulations translated for the training of the Laotians and Cambodians.

4. We treated the Laotian and Cambodian cadres in an inappropriate fashion. Some of our comrades gave lectures to the Cambodians following plans for communist education, disregarding the interest of the audience. As a result, a few Cambodians began to have doubts about us and gradually drifted away from us.

I reported the above to the Central Committee and set to formulate a general line for assisting the revolution in Laos and Cambodia. In early 1949 I concentrated on drawing up an "Outline for the Work in Laos and Cambodia", which would be made known not only to the Vietnamese cadres working in

these two countries but also to the leading Laotian and Cambodian cadres in order that they be able to better co-operate with each other.

In February of the same year, I submitted this draft outline to an enlarged meeting of the Central Council of Cadres Abroad for deliberation and revision. All the participants, including many leading cadres from the west front, were unanimous in their approval of my outline, regarding it as a blueprint for the revolution, and widely publicized it among the cadres and fighters in various special zones in west Laos and northwest Cambodia. The outline included the following parts.

Part one—a review of the "three years' work in Laos and Cambodia" (1946-1948).

Although we have helped Laos and Cambodia in establishing their own political power, launching revolutionary movement and waging a war of resistance against France, a large-scale mass following is lacking; their administrative organs and organs for resistance are weak; and the people's own armed forces have not been organized, not to speak of the existence of any main forces. In short, there is no solid groundwork for resistance in Laos and Cambodia.

Although we have opened the Laos and Cambodia war theatres in which the French imperialists are kept fighting, we have failed to check their advance. The enemy can still use its bases in Laos and Cambodia to attack us and supply their ruling organs in these two countries with resources of our country to undermine the Laotian and Cambodian liberation movements.

Although we have established good-neighbour relationship with Laos and Cambodia, our thoughtless acts have caused disputes in these two places, which have been exploited by the saboteurs to sow discord between us and those two countries.

Where do these shortcomings stem from?

They stem from our lack of a clear understanding of the nature and the characteristics of the Laotian and Cambodian revolutions and of a correct approach as to how to help these two countries, and our failure to grasp the key link in our work there.

Part two—an analysis of the nature and characteristics of the Laotian and Cambodian revolutions.

On the whole in terms of social development, the level in Laos and Cambodia is lower than in Viet Nam....

It follows that conditions in these two countries are not yet ripe for carrying out a socialist or a new-democratic revolution, except a revolution to win national liberation.

The Vietnamese revolution is also aimed at achieving national liberation. However, with a comparatively higher level of economic, political and social development, Viet Nam can afford to raise the slogans of winning independence and democracy simultaneously. Under the conditions prevailing in Laos and Cambodia, however, only one slogan of striving for independence can be put forward. To achieve independence, the two countries must unite the people of all strata, whether feudal or bourgeois, rich or poor, progressive or backward, who want to fight France wholeheartedly and win national independence.

This does not mean that the Laotian and Cambodian revolutions would result in a "dictatorship" by some individuals. We must notice that although the revolution in Laos and Cambodia is at a rather low stage ("in the bud stage"), the leaders of the revolution stand willy-nilly on the side of the world democratic camp. Moreover, since the leaders have to rely on the masses to do everything in the course of revolution, democratic ideas will emerge in the minds of both the leader and the led. Being democratic in content, the revolution will naturally take a democratic form. Both the constitutional monarchy and

the national liberation committee are democratic to a certain extent and they are improving gradually. To insist on the slogan of striving for democracy at the present stage will not promote national solidarity of Laos and Cambodia, but will play into the hands of the enemy....

With regard to the characteristics of the Laotian and Cambodian revolutions, the outline pointed out the three unusual phenomena found in the rapid development of the resistance movement in the two neighbouring nations:

1) Governments have been set up without a mass following.

2) Armed struggles have been waged without a revolutionary army.

3) The leading organs are weak.

Although the Laotian and Cambodian revolutions have developed to a higher stage now, efforts must be made to do work needed for development at the lower stage, that is, to gather a mass following and build base areas.

Part three—principles for helping the Laotian and Cambodian revolutions.

1. We cannot proceed from the interests of Viet Nam in doing our work in Laos and Cambodia.... Since we are a nation suffering from foreign aggression and since we are a revolutionary nation, we should always bear in mind the interests of Laos and Cambodia when working for these two countries.... It was wrong for some of our troops to have withdrawn to southern Viet Nam after attacking Xiemrep, as it was for our people in Quang Tri Province not to have returned the weapons they borrowed from the Laotian troops a long time ago, and for our people to have ordered the Laotian troops in Xithon to move to the Fifth Joint Defence Zone in Viet Nam. In doing so, they have violated the principle which states that "we cannot proceed from the interests of Viet

Nam in doing our work in Laos and Cambodia".

2. We should have a good understanding of the principle of national self-determination.... National self-determination is the fundamental principle for handling relations between two nations. All the decisions that have a bearing on the destiny of Laos or Cambodia should be made by these countries themselves. For example, we have no right to decide whether they should join Viet Nam in forming a Federation of Indo-China or, instead, establish their own respective independent states.... The true Laotian and Cambodian revolutionaries are absolutely not people who resist the French aggressors on the one hand and regard Viet Nam as an enemy on the other.

3. We should not mechanically apply what we think best for Viet Nam to the revolution in Laos and Cambodia.... Instead, we should conduct thorough investigation of the economic, political and social conditions of these two countries. Furthermore, we should get to know those Laotian and Cambodian cadres who are close to us.... Through them we should try to find out the policies the enemy has adopted in Laos and Cambodia and get to know the living conditions of the Laotian and Cambodian peoples. When we are ignorant of these things, it is impossible for us to come forward with any ideas suited to local conditions and to avoid mechanical application of our methods in the two countries.

4. We should help the Laotian and Cambodian comrades to gradually take on the work themselves.

Revolution cannot be imported, for it is the product of the people's political awareness and their struggle. The Laotian and Cambodian revolutions are the missions of the Laotian and Cambodian peoples themselves. Before they have become politically awakened and their cadres have mastered correct methods of work, their revolution will not succeed no matter how great the numbers of troops Viet Nam send there to help. In order to enable the Laotian and Cambodian comrades to gradually take on

the work themselves, we must avoid the practice of running the whole show ourselves. Such a practice springs from failure to make the best use of people and to trust them.... When doing any kind of work, we must try every means to work together with the Laotian and Cambodian cadres and invite them to work together with us. We should patiently tell them how to do their jobs, from easy to difficult, from minor to major, and from practical to theoretical, so as to enable them to work on their own and become competent cadres. Only in this way can we genuinely help Laos and Cambodia.

Part four—the urgent task of Laos and Cambodia at present is to build and consolidate the base areas.

The resistance forces in Laos and Cambodia remain weak although tremendous efforts have been made to augment them. Generally speaking, the two countries are still under the political and economic control of the enemy. The people were unorganized. Militarily, there are only two or three armed units engaged in mobile operations, the grain they need has to be transported from remote areas, and wounded officers and men have to be sent abroad for treatment. Resistance headquarters, the Laotian government, for example, were in exile. The members of the Cambodian National Liberation Committee do not get along with each other well, so in fact this Committee, such as it is, is not functioning.

Under such circumstances, we should certainly pay attention to organizing the masses, but our methods of doing this should be different from the methods we used when we were operating underground. We should not solely emphasize the need to establish governments or to engage in military operations. What we should do is to pay equal attention to organizing the masses, establishing governments and building armed forces. Only by combining these three tasks will it be possible to set up base areas.

Without base areas, the troops conducting mobile

operations will have to be on the move all the time, which will gradually wear down their strength and sap their morale.

Without base areas, there can be no revolutionary governments.

Without base areas, the war of resistance against the French aggressors will be out of the question....

In this part there were passages dealing with the building of political parties in Laos and Cambodia.

... Government organs will take care of government work. The army will concentrate on military work. And it is the political parties that should go among the masses to awaken and mobilize them.... A political party is composed of people who have the highest political consciousness and are the most devoted to the revolutionary cause. If the mass organizations are likened to a fruit, the political party is the kernel; if the former are a battalion of troops, the latter is its indispensable staff headquarters.

... In essence the Laotian and Cambodian revolutions are aimed at winning national independence. Therefore, the political parties needed by these two countries should be independent parties. They should not be democratic ones as advocated by some Laotian cadres or socialist ones as advocated by some Cambodian cadres....

This outline was adopted at the cadres' meeting on the work in Laos and Cambodia and was submitted to the Central Committee in written form. The whole text of this document was made known to all the overseas Vietnamese cadres and fighters on the Laotian and Cambodian battlefields. The outline helped improve and speed up our assistance in Laos and Cambodia. After reading the outline, the Laotian and Cambodian comrades were very pleased because they saw that it was in the interests of their countries that Viet Nam was extending assistance to them, not in those of Viet Nam itself.

In October 1949 the Central Committee sent me a telegram assigning me as head of the delegation of the Vietnamese

Federation of Trade Unions which would go to Beijing, at the end of that year, to attend the Asian-Australian Trade Unions Conference. I immediately made preparations for the trip. Bui Cac was to go along with me. He had a good command of English and French and had broad experience in going through all the formalities necessary for the trip. I wouldn't have made it without his help.

IV. Dealing with the Problems That Arose on My Way to Beijing

If one wanted to get to China from Thailand, one usually went to Hongkong from Bangkok by ship and then from Hongkong to China by train. However, as China had just been liberated, the situation in south China was not stable, and Hongkong was under the control of Britain. If we travelled through these places, something unfortunate might befall us. So we decided to go to China via Burma, India, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, for these countries were very friendly to Viet Nam. Besides, there were some Vietnamese cadres working in the International Federation of Trade Unions and the International Students Federation in Czechoslovakia, and we wanted to see them on the way in order to learn more about their work and to give them correct guidance. But this well conceived arrangement of ours didn't work out successfully.

Before setting out, we sent a telegram to Le Duc Chinh, representative of the Vietnamese Federation of Trade Unions in Czechoslovakia. At the same time we wired Louis Saillant, President of the World Federation of Trade Unions, informing him that I, head of the delegation of the Vietnamese Federation of Trade Unions, was going to attend the Conference with a secretary travelling along with me, and asking him to help us apply for visas to Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and China, when he arrived in Czechoslovakia from France.

We hurried to Rangoon to wait for news about our entrance visas. During my stay, I gave a few talks to our

comrades working there. The contents were the same as those of my talks to the comrades working in Thailand. About 20 days later, we received a telegram from Prague which said: "Visas can be obtained in Bombay." These words could be taken to mean that our visas had been issued in Bombay, India.

Then we left for Bombay at once. We went to the Czech consulate to inquire about our visas. They replied that they had not received any instructions on this matter from their government. We had to pay the consul 50 rupees to inquire for us about our visas by telegram. Soon we got the visas to Czechoslovakia. However, when we went to buy air tickets, all the airline companies in Bombay told us that to fly to Czechoslovakia we had to have not only visas to Czechoslovakia, but also transit visas from the countries in which we would have to stop over. So, we went to the consulates of Italy, Switzerland and Iraq to apply for transit visas. But they all said that because their countries had no diplomatic relations with Viet Nam, they could not issue visas for us. This being the case, we decided to leave Bombay for Pakistan, where we might be able to get all the needed transit visas. Even if we met with difficulties, we could ask the Pakistani Minister of Foreign Affairs or Minister of the Interior for help, because both of them were friendly to and sympathized with Viet Nam and had helped the Vietnamese cadres in their revolutionary activities.

We came to Karachi, where we were cordially received by the Pakistani Minister of the Interior, who gave us three more months for staying in Karachi and said that he would always be ready to help when we needed it. As we had done in Bombay, we asked several airline companies in Karachi about tickets to Czechoslovakia. When the staff members of the Pakistani Airline Company learned that we were the Vietnamese delegates to the Asian-Australian Trade Unions Conference, they did what they could to help us. One day, an airport official told us that a British airplane was going to fly to Czechoslovakia. It would stop in Rome for just an hour to refuel, so the passengers would just wait at the airport and thus would have no need for transit visas. Although the tickets were

rather expensive, we could arrive at Czechoslovakia on the same day we left. He suggested that we take that airplane. We thanked him and went to book the tickets right away. The following day, we left for Czechoslovakia. When we arrived in Prague, Le Duc Chinh, representative of the Vietnamese Trade Unions in Czechoslovakia, and Huong, representative of the International Students Federation, were already there to meet us.

In Prague we stayed in a moderate hotel. From Le Duc Chinh and Huong we learned that Louis Saillant had left for Beijing with two Vietnamese cadres from Bangkok and that he had helped us to apply at the Soviet Embassy in Prague for transit visas. Then Comrade Bui Cac hurried to the Soviet Embassy to get our visas. At first the Embassy replied that they knew nothing about our visas. But Bui Cac told them that Louis Saillant had said that he had gone through the formalities for us at the Embassy. They promised to check. Three days later, they informed us that they had found a visa for Bui Cac, but none for me. Bui Cac said that if there was a visa for him, there had to be one for me, since I, Hoang Van Hoan, was the head of the delegation and he was just the secretary. The Embassy promised to check again.

While waiting for my visa, we learned from Le Duc Chinh that Le Hy had been expelled from the Soviet Union to Czechoslovakia, where he was allowed to stay in Prague, as Tran Ngoc Danh stood guarantor for him. After Tran Ngoc Danh had declared the dissolution of the representative office of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in France, he had been recommended to Czechoslovakia by the Central Committee of the French Communist Party. It seemed that he wanted to set up a representative office of the Vietnamese government. The Czechoslovak authorities provided him with a magnificent, well-equipped building. His wife Thai Thi Lien was studying in the Conservatory of Music of Czechoslovakia.

We digged into the matter and learned that Tran Ngoc Danh was actively carrying out anti-Party activities.

Tran Ngoc Danh, a brother of Comrade Tran Phu's, took part in the revolution in his early years. He had studied in the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow, where he had acquired much theoretical knowledge. But he did not assimilate what he had learned because he lacked practical work experience. When he saw that since the August Revolution in 1945, far from eliminating the bourgeois and landlord classes and embarking on the socialist revolution, our Party had maintained contacts with capitalist countries like India, Burma, Pakistan and Indonesia, he believed that our Party had made Right deviationist mistakes. He wrote letters to a few parties, alleging that the line advocated by President Ho and the Party Central Committee was wrong. Ho Thi Minh, a girl from southern Viet Nam studying in France then, rebutted his allegation. She said, if the line was wrong, how come that the Party had succeeded in leading the August Revolution to victory and in mobilizing the people to rise up against the French aggressors? Although Tran Ngoc Danh had nothing to say in reply, he continued to spread anti-Party ideas among our cadres in Czechoslovakia. Le Duc Chinh and Huong did not agree with his ideas, and yet they failed to refute him for lack of theoretical knowledge. Except for Le and Huong who stayed in Prague, all the other comrades had gone to Beijing with Louis Saillant to attend the Asian-Australian Trade Unions Conference.

Things had come to such a pass that I felt we had to deal with the crisis immediately. I talked twice with Le Duc Chinh and Huong to help them realize the seriousness of the problem and to enable them to denounce Tran Ngoc Danh's views. Also, I went to see a Chinese comrade in charge of the Prague Branch of the Xinhua News Agency and explained to him the difficulties we had had on the way and asked him to wire the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing that I might not be able to get to Beijing in time for the Asian-Australian Trade Unions Conference. I also told him about the ideological problems that the Vietnamese cadres in Prague had and asked him to lend me some CPC Central

Committee documents, such as the speeches Comrades Mao Zedong and Lu Dingyi had delivered during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, so that I could refer to these documents in my effort to rectify the ideological deviations found among those Vietnamese cadres working in Prague. This Chinese comrade was extremely helpful: he lent me as many documents as he could lay his hand on.

After finishing reading these documents, Bui Cac and I went to talk to Tran Ngoc Danh at his place. I flatly criticized him for violating principles and dissolving our representative office in France. He tried to defend himself, saying that at that time the French authorities had sent people to create trouble and even incited a handful of hooligans to ram their cars against ours. I accepted his explanation. But I pointed it out to him that the representative office belonged to the state, that the cadre in charge of it was appointed by the state. No matter how dangerous the situation had been, he had no right to dissolve it. It would be all right if, found in such a situation, the head of the office wanted to leave the post, for the state could certainly send another cadre to replace him. But, once a representative office was dissolved, it would leave no post whatsoever for the state to fill in. He had fallen into the trap of the French colonialists by dissolving the representative office. When I had finished my analysis, Tran Ngoc Danh realized that he was in the wrong, but he digressed into side issues refusing to admit his mistakes. I also criticized Le Hy, who sat there in silence, neither acknowledging his mistakes, nor trying to defend himself. In the end I said that since both of them had worked abroad for many years, it was time for them to return home to report to the government and accept new tasks. Le Hy remained silent, but Tran Ngoc Danh said that he was not well and that the doctor had advised him not to travel by plane or by train. I understood that, as he had been recommended by the Central Committee of the French Communist Party and specially received by the Czechoslovak Communist Party, he wanted to stay in Czechoslovakia, instead of returning to Viet Nam.

The problems of Tran Ngoc Danh and Le Hy could only be handled roughly before they were reported to the Central Committee for final solution. (Later, they returned home and were severely criticized by the Central Committee and indefinitely expelled from the Party.) Le Duc Chinh and Huong learnt a lot from this event. Le said that they had always felt that there was something wrong with Tran Ngoc Danh's views before, but they had never been able to refute his views because their theoretical understanding was not high enough; that they had been enlightened by my analysis and criticism made from the perspectives of theory and practice, and felt capable of refuting all the incorrect views of Tran Ngoc Danh's now; and that they had always been convinced that the approach taken by the Party Central Committee and President Ho was absolutely correct.

A few days later, the Soviet Embassy in Prague finally found my transit visa which would expire in six days. We immediately left Prague for Moscow, hoping to arrive in Beijing as early as possible.

Part Six

YEARS IN CHINA AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE

(1950-1957)

On December 25, 1949, Comrade Bui Cac and I left Prague and arrived in Moscow two days later. We put up at a cheap, small hotel. Though the hotel people knew that we were not rich guests, they gave us good service, arranging for us to stay in a double room at a cost of 25 roubles a day. Soon after we settled down, we went to the Chinese Embassy for entry visas.

But again something unexpected happened. The Chinese Embassy said that about a month ago some Vietnamese had come here together with Louis Saillant to apply for entry visas to China to attend the Asian-Australian Trade Unions Conference and they did not mention that more Vietnamese friends would be arriving here. I said I was head of the delegation of the Vietnamese Trade Unions Federation, and my companion was the secretary of the delegation. We had come from Thailand and had been stranded in India and Pakistan before arriving in Moscow. The Chinese Embassy said the Conference was over and that since they had not received any instructions from the Chinese government, in principle they could not grant us entry visas.

I said that I understood their position. Being Vietnamese,

we had been delayed by the capitalist countries that had refused to grant us transit visas. If we travelled back via those countries, we would be bound to encounter even more difficulties; also, our transit visas to stay in the Soviet Union would expire within four days. I requested the Chinese Embassy to issue us transit visas so that we could go straight back to Viet Nam from China, if they could not issue us entry visas. Once in China, we would explain our situation to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party during our stay in Beijing, as we were sure that our Party Central Committee had informed the CPC Central Committee about our plans to attend the Asian-Australian Trade Unions Conference. The Chinese Embassy agreed to issue us transit visas.

After getting our visas, we bought train tickets at once. On December 31, 1949, we arrived in Manzhouli, the first stop on the Chinese side along the Sino-Soviet border. We were warmly received by the people from the foreign affairs office there. On January 1, 1950, they made all arrangements for us and sent a comrade from the People's Liberation Army to accompany us to Beijing and then to the Foreign Ministry. Those Vietnamese comrades who had come to Beijing earlier together with Louis Saillant from Czechoslovakia to attend the Asian-Australian Trade Unions Conference had been waiting for us there. I briefed them on the obstacles we had met on the way and listened to their account of the Conference. With the help of the Foreign Ministry, Bui Cac and myself put up at its guesthouse in Langfang Toutiao, pending further arrangements by the Government Administration Council of the People's Republic of China.

Then I learned that President Ho and Comrade Tran Dang Ninh were on their way from Sino-Vietnamese border to Beijing to hold talks with the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.

After arriving in Beijing, President Ho stayed at Zhongnanhai, where Chairman Mao Zedong lived. It was also the seat of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. I also moved to Zhongnanhai to stay with President Ho.

I. Staying in Beijing in Accordance with President Ho's Instructions

In Zhongnanhai, President Ho made a detailed inquiry of the conditions of the overseas Vietnamese residing in Thailand as well as of our offices in Thailand, Burma and France. I made an item-by-item report to him. President Ho said that the overseas offices of the Central Committee had done a good job. He added that now that China had won liberation, the balance of power was favourable to the revolutionary cause of the people all over the world, particularly to the Vietnamese people's anti-French war. During the past few years, we had scored great victories by relying on our own strength to resist French aggression. As China had decided to provide aid for us on many fronts, we had to shift the focus of work in foreign affairs from Thailand to China. Hence, it was probable that I would stay in Beijing to take on a new mission. He pointed out that there would be a lot of new things for me to learn in the course of my work. What was most favourable to us was that Comrades Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai had all expressed their readiness to do their best to support the Vietnamese in their struggle, although China had just won its liberation and had numerous difficulties to overcome.

As early as in 1938-1940, President Ho had come to China from the Soviet Union to establish contact with Vietnamese revolutionary organizations and met with comrades from the Overseas Headquarters of the Vietnamese Party in Kunming. In June 1940 when the German fascists occupied Paris, President Ho proposed that the centre of revolutionary activities move to the Viet Nam-China border. After that he returned to Viet Nam. And then he went to Chongqing and exchanged views on the situation with the representatives of the CPC Central Committee. Almost ten years had elapsed since then. During this period, he founded the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and achieved successes in the war of resistance against France. So, when he met with Chairman Mao Zedong

and asked for assistance, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party promptly agreed to give it, regarding it as a primary international task for China, the largest country in Asia and one which had shaken off its past as a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country (a country which had been carved up and manipulated by imperialist countries due to the senility of the feudal Qing Dynasty and of Chiang Kai-shek's bureaucrat-capitalist regime).

Chairman Mao Zedong hosted a grand banquet in Zhongnanhai in honour of President Ho. Almost all the high-ranking Party leaders were present, such as Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Dong Biwu, Lin Boqu and half a dozen other comrades. It was a banquet to celebrate the victory of our August Revolution, praise the Vietnamese people's firm determination and will in their war against France, exalt the brilliant leadership by President Ho and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Indo-China. It was also a banquet to express the Chinese people's solidarity and militant friendship with the Vietnamese people in their heroic fight against foreign aggressors. At the banquet Comrade Liu Shaoqi asked President Ho who, among those who had attended the training class in Guangzhou in 1925 and 1926, was still active. Pointing at me, President Ho answered that Comrade Hoang Van Hoan was one of them.

President Ho then told me that Comrade Liu Shaoqi was one of the comrades who often gave lectures at the training class. I at once proposed a toast to Comrade Liu Shaoqi, wishing him good health and pledging to work wholeheartedly for the revolution. Comrade Liu Shaoqi wished me the same.

After the banquet, the two Parties started substantive talks.

Comrade Liu Shaoqi said that the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party had decided to recognize the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and would hold consultations with the Soviet Union to suggest that it do the same so that Viet Nam would win more international recognition.

Now, the Soviet Union, the people's democracies in East Europe, Korea and Mongolia had already recognized the People's Republic of China, and so had the United Kingdom. France was about to do so too. If China recognized the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, France would certainly postpone its recognition of China, but China was not afraid. When China became stronger, France would have to recognize it. The important thing to do now was to give active support to the Vietnamese people in their war of resistance and enable them to win victory as soon as possible.

With this in mind, the Chinese government immediately contacted Comrade Roshin, the Soviet Ambassador to China, asking him to inform the Soviet government of China's suggestion. China also suggested President Ho go personally to the Soviet Union to meet with Comrade Stalin to give him an account of the situation in Viet Nam. With the consent of the Soviet government, Ambassador Roshin held a banquet in honour of President Ho before his visit to the Soviet Union. Comrade Tran Dang Ninh and myself were also invited. At the banquet, President Ho told Roshin that I would be appointed representative of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Vietnamese government to China. He also requested Roshin's co-operation when it was necessary to exchange views or when we needed his help.

Two days later, President Ho and Comrade Tran Dang Ninh left for Moscow, while I stayed behind in Beijing to keep in touch with the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and Chinese Foreign Ministry, preparing to set up a Vietnamese Embassy in China.

After completing his talks in Moscow, President Ho flew back to Beijing and stayed for a couple of days to continue talks about some specific issues and propose to China that I be appointed representative of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the Communist Party of Indo-China to China. Chairman Mao Zedong accepted this proposal. In order to unleash his plans as early as possible under the new conditions, President Ho hurried back to Viet Nam.

After President Ho and Tran Dang Ninh left, I moved from Zhongnanhai to Liuguo Hotel (it was then the guesthouse of the Administration Council of the Central People's Government, later renamed the International Hotel) and maintained direct contacts with Comrade Li Kenong, Deputy Foreign Minister, for the establishment of the Vietnamese Embassy.

It happened that the Chinese Foreign Ministry was planning to start a class specially to train the first group of diplomats who would serve as ambassadors abroad. With the consent of Premier Zhou Enlai, I attended the training class as a returned overseas Chinese. In the Foreign Ministry, only Comrade Li Kenong knew I was Vietnamese. When the class wound up, Comrade Li Kenong sent an experienced cadre to help me establish the embassy. We chose a mansion in Shijia Hutong, which was formerly a school run by Americans, to be our embassy. All facilities and staff needed in the embassy, such as cooks, stokers, managerial staff, cleaners and other service people, were provided by the Foreign Ministry. Groups of cadres were transferred from home and Thailand to Beijing. Our embassy, with its picked and capable staff, was set up, and the certificate of appointment from Viet Nam reached Beijing.

According to usual practice only the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary was entitled to present a letter of credence to the head of state while the representative of government would only present his certificate of appointment to the Foreign Ministry. But I was given preferential treatment by the Chinese Foreign Ministry which arranged for me to meet with Chairman Mao Zedong, a meeting equivalent to the ceremony presenting a letter of credence to the head of state. After the meeting, the Foreign Ministry also arranged for me to meet with Soviet and Czech ambassadors, helped me contact different Chinese cultural and economic departments concerned with Viet Nam and pay visit to leading members of the Beijing Municipal Party Committee and government as well as of mass organizations such as the Trade Unions Federation, the Youth League and the Women's Federation.

In my contact with embassies of fraternal countries in China, some ambassadors asked why Viet Nam had not established diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level with China but had only sent a government representative instead. The reason was that diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level was the highest level while diplomatic relations at the government representative level was lower. Previously we had always held that a government representative and an ambassador were the same. I reported this home. The Party Central Committee and the government then decided to appoint me ambassador. That's why although I had taken part in all kinds of diplomatic activities in my capacity as an ambassador, I was not officially appointed ambassador until December 20, 1950, and did not present the letter of credence as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam to China until April 28, 1951. I also served as such an ambassador concurrently to Mongolia and Korea.

As the anti-French war was in full swing, all cadres at home had to be engaged in the struggle. The Party Central Committee and the government entrusted me with most of the diplomatic work abroad. In that period, I kept close ties with ambassadors to China from fraternal countries, particularly with those from the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. I not only maintained friendly ties with them, I also had a lot to learn from them as far as foreign affairs were concerned. I also maintained constant ties with ambassadors from India, Burma and Pakistan although their governments had not yet recognized my country. In my contacts with them, I often explained to them about the situation in Viet Nam to win their moral support. Moreover, I also kept friendly contacts with embassies of Western countries, such as Finland, Denmark and Switzerland that were not in favour of France's aggression against Viet Nam.

In order to expand our contacts with other countries, the Party Central Committee and government sent me to the Soviet Union to attend the May Day celebrations in 1950 and

then to Czechoslovakia to attend its National Day celebrations on May 9 and settle the matters left unsolved during my stay in Czechoslovakia at the end of 1949.

During the May Day celebrations in the Soviet Union, I witnessed for the first time the impressive and dignified manner of the Soviet Red Army, which was equipped with most updated arms and demonstrated the invincible power of the world's first socialist country. I also saw a parade of hundreds of thousands of high-spirited people pass in good order by the rostrum at Lenin's Mausoleum. After the celebration, the Soviet comrades showed me around the magnificent city of Moscow and let me visit some factories. In the evening, I attended performances of opera, acrobatics and puppets. I had often heard in the past that the Soviet Union was the motherland of the world proletariat and the beacon illuminating the road ahead for the oppressed nations, but it wasn't until now that I had the opportunity to see it for myself, which filled me with confidence in the future of the revolution. What I heard and saw in the Soviet Union could be summarized in one word: "Magnificent!"

To prepare myself for the National Day celebrations of Czechoslovakia, I went to the Chinese Embassy in Moscow to learn about protocol matters and ask for some help. I was warmly received by Ambassador Wang Jiaxiang. He said that he had not known that I had been a leading cadre in the Vietnamese revolution when I visited the embassy the previous year and was very pleased to meet me again. He told me that he was present when Comrade Stalin met with President Ho early that year and that Comrade Stalin showed great concern for the Vietnamese people's war of resistance, saying that China should shoulder the major responsibility in aiding Viet Nam. Ambassador Wang said the Chinese people would do their utmost to help Viet Nam, and he was sure that the Vietnamese people would win final victory in their war of resistance against foreign aggressors.

I said I had come to express the good will of the Viet-

namese people to the Chinese people, that I would soon go to Czechoslovakia to attend the National Day celebrations and that I wished to get some information on matters of protocol. As I understood, at National Day celebrations representatives from various countries were expected to deliver speeches of congratulations. I had prepared one, which had been translated into Chinese, and requested him to help to revise it and make it sound right and then ask someone to translate it into French and prepare a clean copy, which I could submit to the National Day Celebration Preparatory Committee of Czechoslovakia to be translated into Czech and read at the rally.

After reading the Chinese translation, Comrade Wang Jiaxiang said that there was no need to make any revision and that he would ask people to translate it into French and prepare a clean copy for me. He added that although some of the comrades at the embassy could do the translation, they had no good command of the French language.

After that, Comrade Wang Jiaxiang proposed that I meet with some leading cadres of the embassy and brief them on the situation in Viet Nam, which I did. I availed myself of this opportunity to talk about the close relations between our two countries since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, the August Revolution in Viet Nam, and the war of resistance which was still going on. After my talk, the embassy gave me a pleasant banquet. Then, Comrade Wang Jiaxiang gave me a typed copy of the French translation and wished me success on my visit to Czechoslovakia.

My visit to the Chinese Embassy was fruitful. The following day I left for Czechoslovakia by plane and was seen off by some diplomats of the Chinese Embassy at the airport.

Attending the National Day celebrations of Czechoslovakia was an extremely important event in my life as well as an event of great importance in the history of the Vietnamese revolution. It was the first time that the representative from the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam had attended the grand national celebrations of a fraternal country. I had the chance to meet with many dignitaries and revolutionary comrades

from various fraternal countries, feel personally the great importance attached by the other countries to Viet Nam, and review from the rostrum a parade of hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians. This was not an honour for me as an individual, but an honour for a nation which had been subjected to imperialist rule for nearly a century and had just recently achieved its independence and resumed its international status.

The celebration rally was well organized; different kinds of activities were well co-ordinated. There is one event that has long since remained in my memory. In the hotel where I stayed with guests who had come from other countries for the National Day celebrations, there was a maid in charge of cleaning rooms and serving the guests. She did perfect work and was warm towards the guests. From the outset, I thought she was an ordinary maid working in the hotel. To my surprise, at a get-together after the National Day celebrations, I learned she was a fifth-year law student. As I figured, college students in Viet Nam or some other countries were reluctant to do such work, but here people regarded it as an honour to serve the foreign guests during the National Day celebrations. I thought we should learn from her example, and I mentioned it in my report to the Central Committee and my talks with cadres after I returned home.

According to some friends attending the National Day celebrations, although Czechoslovakia was not a big East European country, it ranked second in the world as far as the people's living standards were concerned (Holland being the first). Though not so grand looking as Moscow, Prague was a very beautiful, clean ancient city, where there was no litter in the streets, unlike many Asian cities I had visited.

Attending the National Day celebrations of Czechoslovakia was a chance for me to have a glimpse of the material civilization in Europe.

After the celebrations, I stayed in Prague for another week and met with comrades of the Liaison Department of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. I gave them a brief account of the situation in Viet Nam and

discussed with them about certain matters, for instance, I requested of them that they issue entry or transit visas for our cadres leaving France and defray their travel expenses when necessary.

During my stay in Czechoslovakia, Tran Ngoc Danh was still there for medical treatment and he came to see me once in Prague. Le Hy often showed me around and served as my interpreter. I asked Le Hy to go with me to Beijing and let Tran Ngoc Danh remain for further treatment in Czechoslovakia until he was better.

II. The Profound Friendship Between Viet Nam and China

During my eight years as Vietnamese Ambassador to China and the representative of the Central Committee of the Labour Party of Viet Nam, the profound friendship between Viet Nam and China and the tremendous assistance given by China, which played a decisive role in the victory won by the Vietnamese people in their war of resistance against France, left an indelible impression on me.

As an eyewitness, I feel obligated to give a brief account here of China's assistance to Viet Nam, which was filled with proletarian internationalism, in order to enable the Vietnamese people and people in other parts of the world to have a true understanding of its importance.

The assistance provided by China can be broken down into four categories as follows.

1. Political and Diplomatic Support

From December 1946 when the Vietnamese people's anti-French war started to the time when it entered the stage of stalemate, no country had recognized the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. On January 18, 1950, three months after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese government officially announced its recognition of the DRVN. On

January 30, the Soviet Union did the same. Then the people's democracies in East Europe and Korea and Mongolia in Asia followed suit. Although other Asian countries such as India, Burma and Pakistan had not yet recognized DRVN, they were sympathetic and friendly to our country.

In the socialist camp, China took the lead in recognizing the DRVN, thus putting Viet Nam in a stronger position. This was an extremely important event in the course of the Vietnamese people's struggle for independence. Hence, our country made January 18 "Diplomatic Victory Day" to be celebrated every year.

1) At the Geneva Conference held in 1954, China fully supported the stand of the DRVN. Comrade Zhou Enlai, head of the Chinese delegation, and Comrade Molotov, head of the Soviet delegation, closely co-operated with the Vietnamese delegation and crushed the U.S. plot to undermine the conference. As a result, North Viet Nam as a whole was liberated and the DRVN became a country with a capital of its own, with harbours and international recognition, and a strong base for the struggle to reunify the Fatherland. Facts have proved that the Geneva Agreement meant an important victory for the Vietnamese revolution, because our stable and powerful base in the North had provided an enormous impetus to the struggle to liberate the South. China's contribution at the conference, like its aid to Viet Nam in the war, had brought about a change in the balance of power, with French imperialism withdrawing all its troops from North Viet Nam and the French government recognizing the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the DRVN.

2) While helping Viet Nam rebuild and develop its economy in the North, China gave active support to the struggle of the people in the South. It firmly expressed its determination: "China will provide the Vietnamese people with all the material support they need and is ready to dispatch its own personnel to fight shoulder to shoulder with the people in South Viet Nam when the Vietnamese people deem it necessary." Through its mass media, China kept its people constantly informed of

the struggle of the people in South Viet Nam. It also published many books and pictorials and commissioned many works of art, such as the dance drama "Raging Flames in the Coconut Grove", to win the sympathy and support of the people all over the world for the struggle of the people in South Viet Nam.

3) After American imperialism bombarded North Viet Nam in August 1964, there was a new upsurge of Chinese aid for Viet Nam's resistance to the U.S. aggressors. It remains fresh in my memory that hundreds of millions of Chinese people in various provinces marched in procession to voice their support for Viet Nam. After U.S. planes bombarded Dong Hai, Vinh Linh, Quang Binh and other places on February 7 and 8, 1965, Chairman Mao Zedong and Comrades Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, He Long, Li Xiannian and Lu Dingyi attended a mass rally of over one million people in Beijing on February 10. China solemnly stated: "The aggression committed by the United States against the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam means invasion of China.... The Chinese people will take all necessary measures, even to make the greatest national sacrifice, to support the Vietnamese people to carry the struggle against U.S. aggression for national salvation through to the end."

Historical facts have proved that China's powerful support played an extremely important role in foiling a direct U.S. attack on North Viet Nam.

2. Material Support Provided by China During the Wars with France and the U.S. and for Economic Development in North Viet Nam

The Chinese government once declared: "The 700 million Chinese people stand firmly behind the Vietnamese people, and the vast territory of China is the reliable rear area of the Vietnamese people." This did not remain in words but was translated into deeds. From 1950 to 1978, the total value of China's material aid to Viet Nam exceeded 20 billion U.S. dollars, accounting for 41 per cent of the total volume of its aid to foreign countries. During the war years from 1950

through 1954, China was the only country that provided military aid to Viet Nam. All the weapons, ammunition and equipment needed by Vietnamese army were supplied by China based on the Vietnamese defence budget and the needs of the campaigns. During the war against the U.S. imperialists, China provided the bulk of weapons, ammunition and military equipment, including army uniforms, medicine, medical apparatus and instruments, and large amount of guns, tanks, armoured cars, anti-aircraft guns, rockets, planes, warships and all sorts of spare parts and fuels, enough to equip 2 million soldiers. In addition, China guaranteed adequate supplies of ammunition and equipment needed for continuous fighting at various battlefields.

1) Aids for rebuilding and developing the economy in the North. After peace was restored in 1954, at the request of President Ho, China helped us immediately to repair the 200-kilometre-long Hanoi-Tongdeng Railway, which had been completely destroyed during the war. As China was unable to manufacture narrow-gauge rails yet, Chairman Mao Zedong decided to dismantle the narrow rails of the Datong-Puzhou Railway in Shanxi Province and ship them to Viet Nam, together with all the locomotives and train cars needed. With the help of Chinese technicians and workers, the repair work was completed within just four months, which "brought Viet Nam closer to China, the Soviet Union and other friendly countries, linking up Hanoi with Beijing, Moscow and the East European capitals as far as Berlin." (President Ho's words) After that, China set about helping Viet Nam to build a fairly comprehensive economic system to serve as a material foundation for standing on its own.

2) Aids to meet the practical needs of economic development and people's daily life. Beginning in 1954, China planned to help Viet Nam to build 450 construction projects. By the end of March 1978, 339 projects had been completed, including rice-milling plants, sugar refineries, textile mills, knitting mills, paper mills, power plants, chemical plants, rubber plants, soap factories, cigarette factories, match factories, bulb

and thermos flask factories, enamelware factories, ceramics factories, Hong Ha Stationery Factory, M.S.G. factories, chemical fertilizer plants, insecticide plants, shipyards, the Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel Complex, mining equipment, radio systems, state farms, and agro-technical schools and the repair of the railway from Hanoi to Lao Cai and Thai Nguyen as well as the rebuilding of the Ham Rong Bridge. When U.S. planes started to bombard the North in 1965, the Chinese government, at the request of our government, dispatched many groups of specialists and technicians to help Viet Nam dismantle machinery and equipment of scores of industrial enterprises that had earlier been built with China's assistance, and then ship them to safe areas.

3) Supplies for the front and for the people's daily needs. From 1965 through 1975, China gave Viet Nam more than 5 million tons of grain, 300 million metres of cloth, 30,000 trucks, 600 ships, 100 locomotives, 4,000 carriages, 2 million tons of petrol and various kinds of knit-ware and articles of daily necessity, amounting to 700 million Chinese yuan.

4) The most valuable assistance that China gave to Viet Nam from 1955 through 1976 was 600 million U.S. dollars in cash as reserve for use in the struggle for the liberation of the South, although China itself was in dire need of foreign currency for national reconstruction.

3. Personnel Support

After 1950, the most pressing task confronting Viet Nam was to win the war against France. At the request of President Ho and the Vietnamese Party Central Committee, China sent a group of military advisers and a group of political advisers to assist Viet Nam.

1) The task of the group of military advisers headed by Comrade Wei Guoqing was to help Viet Nam build its army and to impart China's combat experience to the Vietnamese. Besides assisting the Central Military Commission of Viet Nam, the group also set up advisory teams for the departments of general staff, political work and logistics to help build up

the 304th, 308th, 312nd and 316th Divisions as well as the main forces of other arms and services. With the help of the Chinese advisers and the great efforts of Vietnamese soldiers themselves, Viet Nam began to possess a main force comprised of several field divisions, which could bit by bit annihilate the enemy's effectives. In fact, through a number of campaigns beginning with the Border Campaign at the end of 1950 to the Dien Bien Phu Campaign in 1954, our army defeated the enemy and finally liberated the whole of North Viet Nam.

2) The task of the group of political advisers headed by Comrade Luo Guibo was to give advice to the Labour Party of Viet Nam and to the respective ministries and departments under the Viet Nam government on their policies and day-to-day work, with a view to building up a powerful liberated area capable of providing support to fighting at the front. The head of the group often exchanged views with the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee, whereas the various advisory teams assisted Vietnamese comrades in departments of finance, taxation, banking, transport and communications, public security, and intelligence. Together with the Vietnamese cadres, Chinese advisers formulated working principles and policies for various departments, formed executive organs, drew up rules and regulations and methods of work, thus turning out many Vietnamese cadres with political integrity and professional competence and advancing the work on all fronts. When the North was completely liberated in 1955, the group of political advisers as well as the group of military advisers withdrew from Viet Nam as proposed by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Comrade Luo Guibo was appointed Chinese Ambassador to Viet Nam.

3) From the Geneva Conference in 1954, when peace was restored in Viet Nam, to 1978, the urgent task of the people in the North was to rebuild the economy which had been damaged in the war and lay the foundations for socialism so as to make the North a base for reunification of the Fatherland. In order to complete the industrial and agricultural projects, China sent many groups of specialists to Viet Nam with

Comrade Fang Yi as head of the Chinese specialists group (later renamed Office of China's Economic Representative in Viet Nam).

The Vietnamese cadres and workers were deeply impressed by the Chinese specialists' extreme devotion in their work. It was not until 1978, when Le Duan's clique wantonly attacked China, that the Chinese government decided to pull out all its specialists from Viet Nam.

4) One point should be made clear: the Vietnamese side only provided the Chinese advisers and specialists with food, shelter and means of transportation, while their salaries, subsidies and other expenses were borne by the Chinese side. This was not only of great help to Viet Nam, it was also a manifestation of the political attitude on the part of the Chinese cadres working in Viet Nam, who received no special treatment. According to incomplete statistics, the total number of Chinese advisers, specialists and technicians in Viet Nam between 1950 and 1978 was around 20,000. President Ho spoke highly of the contributions they made: "I have absolute trust in the Chinese advisers." He personally awarded the highest medals to the heads of the advisers and specialists groups. The Vietnamese government and the Central Military Commission also honoured the Chinese comrades with numerous awards and citations in recognition of their contributions to Viet Nam's war of resistance and its economic development.

5) From 1965 through 1970, the U.S. imperialists sent their air and naval forces to bombard and shell the North. They even attempted to send troops to invade the North. At the request of President Ho and the Central Committee of the Labour Party of Viet Nam, Chairman Mao Zedong and the CPC Central Committee sent Chinese troops to Viet Nam at different stages, including air defence forces, engineer units, railway engineering corps and logistics units, totalling more than 300,000. They came with arms, equipment, machinery and materials and accomplished many important tasks, building 1,231 kilometres of highway, 476 kilometres of railway, and the Yen Bai airport. At the same time, the Chinese

comrades shot down many U.S. planes and defended, together with the Vietnamese army and people, several communications lines leading from the North to the South. In areas where the Chinese troops were stationed, they helped to evacuate the aged and children, dig air-raid dugouts and treat the sick and wounded, thus cementing the already deep friendship between the Vietnamese and Chinese peoples. In the course of fulfilling their international obligation, more than 1,000 Chinese comrades laid down their lives on Vietnamese soil and 3,000 were wounded. After accomplishing their tasks in July 1970, all the Chinese troops pulled out of Viet Nam. The presence of Chinese troops in Viet Nam also served to deter U.S. imperialism from sending its troops directly into the North, which enabled the Vietnamese army and people to concentrate their energies on liberating the South.

4. Serving As a Solid Rear Area for Viet Nam

Under constant U.S. bombing, transport and communications in the North became extremely difficult. China tried every possible means to help us to thoroughly solve this problem. For instance, they laid a pipeline 4,000 kilometres long for carrying Chinese petrol to South Viet Nam. Beginning in 1967, China used 500 trucks to transport materials directly to Viet Nam. After Hai Phong Harbour was sealed off with mines by the United States, China sent another 2,200 trucks to transport materials along five routes to the interior of Viet Nam.

So far as the sea route is concerned, after 1965, China opened up a secret route along the coast to ship material to some small islands for Viet Nam to ship it further to the South. China also provided two ports on Hainan Island as transfer stations for Viet Nam to transport material to the South.

China spent a large sum of foreign currency to open a communications line leading from the North to the South via Cambodia. Along this line it transported weapons, ammunition, grains, medicine and other material directly to the Liberation Army of South Viet Nam.

China also often helped the Soviet Union and other

countries to transport, free of charge, the supplies these countries were sending to Viet Nam through Chinese territory.

Another important fact was that China allowed Viet Nam to use its territory for training and provided all kinds of necessary equipment.

1) During the War of Resistance Against France, the Vietnamese Army School under the charge of Major Generals Tran Tu Binh and Le Thiet Hung was set up in Yunnan Province, where military cadres were trained with the help of Chinese instructors.

Before the Border Campaign, the newly established main forces, such as the 308th Division, went straight to China to get military equipment before they returned home to participate in the campaign.

2) During the War of Resistance Against the United States, when Vietnamese airports were threatened by U.S. air force attack, the Vietnamese Air Force Units hid and trained at airports in Yunnan.

China helped Viet Nam build a stand-by broadcasting station in Yunnan. On the evening of December 18, 1972, the broadcasting station "Voice of Viet Nam" was bombarded by U.S. planes. Only 9 minutes afterwards Radio Viet Nam in Yunnan took its place and continued broadcasting victory news to the whole nation.

The Nanxi Mountain Hospital in Guilin, Guangxi, with 600 beds was specially for the sick and wounded from Viet Nam. In a seven-year period, about 5,000 Vietnamese cadres received treatment there. After that, all the equipment of the hospital was donated and shipped to Viet Nam. In Guilin, a Vietnamese youngsters' school was set up specially for children of martyrs and for those who had come from the South to the North.

In addition, China provided Viet Nam with an exhibition hall at the Guangzhou Spring and Autumn Commodity Fair, helping promote Vietnamese exports. It also helped Viet Nam print many books, newspapers, magazines, pictures, dictionaries and textbooks.

Premier Zhou Enlai often urged those Chinese comrades who were in charge of the work of assisting Viet Nam to "think what the Vietnamese people think and be eager to meet the needs of the Vietnamese people". China's principle in aiding Viet Nam was the following: Economize on the use of food, clothing and other material, give priority to providing Viet Nam with high quality material and equipment. China tried its utmost to satisfy the needs of Viet Nam, including making foreign purchases on its behalf. It fulfilled its international duties silently without complaint or bravado. Under instructions of Premier Zhou Enlai, Li Qiang, Minister of Foreign Trade, went personally to the Truong Son transportation line to inspect work there, when materials were being shipped to South Viet Nam under the wanton bombing by U.S. planes. President Ho once used such words as "generous", "selfless", "extremely tremendous" and "effective" in describing the aid given by China to Viet Nam. He said: "We are deeply impressed and most grateful for the Chinese people's lofty spirit of internationalism and their friendship with the Vietnamese people."

Facts have shown that China's assistance to Viet Nam over the 28 years from 1950 to 1978 was an indispensable international factor for the Vietnamese people's successes in their revolution and construction. Conversely, a review of what happened from 1978 to 1986 have shown that without China's assistance, Viet Nam has been reduced to a hopeless plight.

I hope my brief account of China's aid to Viet Nam will add an important chapter to the annals of the national liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people and a most glorious chapter in the history of the comradely-brotherly relationship between the people of Viet Nam and China. It goes without saying that we are also deeply grateful to and shall never forget the military aid given by the Soviet Union: for example, the guided missiles with which to shot down U.S. B-52 bombers, and its aid for Viet Nam's economic development. And we feel the same with regard to the aid given by other fraternal countries.

III. Activities at Home

Serving as ambassador of our government and representative of the Party Central Committee to China, I often returned home to report on my work and take part in relevant activities as a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Party and as a member of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly. Especially since transportation conditions improved after our victory in the Border Campaign, I had more chances of returning to Viet Nam. Three events are still fresh in my memory.

1. The Border Campaign in September 1950.
2. The Second National Party Congress held in February 1951.
3. Rectification following the Agrarian Reform in September 1956.

1. The Border Campaign (September 1950)

First of all, we must be clear about the ins and outs of the campaign. In early 1950, when the anti-French war was at a stalemate in Viet Nam and the People's Republic of China was founded after victory had been won in the Chinese revolution, President Ho paid a secret visit to Beijing to ask for help. The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao Zedong readily accepted his request. As I have mentioned above, the first thing China did was to announce its recognition of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam on January 18, 1950. Then China sent a group of cadres headed by Comrade Luo Guibo to Viet Nam to discuss the war situation with the Party Central Committee of Viet Nam. It was clear that, for large quantities of Chinese aid to enter Viet Nam, a transportation route had to be opened across the Sino-Vietnamese border, which meant that the French troops stationed there had to be wiped out. Viet Nam needed various types of assistance from China, of which the most important type was China's military experience. Chairman Mao Zedong agreed to launch the Border Campaign to open up traffic

through the Sino-Vietnamese border. At the same time, he decided to dispatch Comrade Chen Geng, a celebrated general who had fought countless battles and had been acquainted with President Ho since 1925-1926 in Guangzhou, to Viet Nam to help plan the campaign.

In early July 1950 a group of cadres led by Comrade Chen Geng left Yunnan and crossed a mountain range before arriving in Viet Bac. They met President Ho at the "Official Residence of the President of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam" in the jungle somewhere in Thai Nguyen Province and discussed with him how to carry out the campaign. It was a hot summer day. Wearing only a vest and like members of a family, President Ho and Comrade Chen Geng were working out plans for the campaign with the help of a map. President Ho said, "Some people have proposed we attack the enemy's stronghold in Cao Bang first. As soon as Cao Bang is liberated, the border will be under our control." But Comrade Chen Geng pointed out that Cao Bang was a major stronghold of the enemy and that as our troops were not good at fighting large-scale, positional operations, it would take us a long time to seize it and cause us great losses. He said that it would be better to attack the enemy's stronghold in Dong Khe between Cao Bang and Lang Son, and that as there were only about 300 enemy troops stationed there, we could wipe them out in a quick battle. Then, the enemy troops in Cao Bang would be isolated and those in That Khe would certainly move northwards to help; we could intercept and annihilate them on their way. We aimed at wiping out as many of the enemy's effectives as possible. After suffering heavy losses, the enemy would either withdraw or flee. Then we would be able to gain the initiative in the border region. President Ho thought highly of this plan, which was also approved unanimously when it was discussed by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee and the Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief.

Once the plan was adopted, various preparations for the campaign began. President Ho went to the battle front to direct the operation. At this point, a group of military advisers,

composed of advisers from the general staff, political, and logistics departments, led by Comrade Wei Guoqing arrived from Guangxi, China. They were all outstanding commanders of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. The whole border region was exuded with militant friendship between Vietnamese and Chinese revolutionary armies. In high spirits and full of confidence, the people of all nationalities enthusiastically supported the troops at the battle front. A people's war was in the making.

On September 16, 1950, our troops began to attack Dong Khe and on the morning of September 18, 300 enemies were wiped out. After the fall of Dong Khe, Colonel Charton, Army Commander in Cao Bang, had to abandon Cao Bang and withdraw his troops to That Khe. Colonel Lepage, Army Commander in That Khe, led reinforcements of 2,000 men towards Dong Khe. The enemy troops of both armies were cut off and besieged by our troops. After several days of continuous fighting, the enemy troops were completely annihilated on October 8, and Charton, Lepage and other officers were captured. The enemy headquarters in Hanoi hastily ordered their troops stationed in That Khe, Na Sam, Dong Dang, Lang Son and Lao Cai to withdraw. The whole defence system of the French troops in the border region crumbled, and our liberated areas became linked with the vast rear area in China.

After the victory in the Border Campaign, President Ho said at a meeting of cadres, "The victory in the Border Campaign is the victory for proletarian internationalism." Vo Nguyen Giap, commander of this campaign, said, "Through this campaign, we have broken the blockade of the colonialists in the border region and frustrated their attempt to isolate us strategically. This victory will have a great impact on the military, political and economic situation in our country. It is the biggest victory to date in the annals of Vietnamese resistance to foreign aggression. It has proved that Mao Zedong's military thinking is well suited to conditions in Viet Nam, to our armed struggle."

After the National Day celebrations in Czechoslovakia (May 9), I returned to Beijing. In early September when I went back to the border region, preparation for the campaign was under way. When I learned that the Central Committees of the two parties decided to attack Dong Khe instead of Cao Bang, I simply thought that Dong Khe was a small stronghold and thus easy to take. Not until the two armies of Colonels Charton and Lepage were completely annihilated did I realize that the idea to attack Dong Khe first was a great strategic decision and that the mobile warfare tactics and the principle of "attacking a stronghold while annihilating reinforcements coming to its aid" were truly effective. After the campaign, I entered Cao Bang city with some local cadres, only to find it deserted. I stayed in Cao Bang for two days and then went to the place where the Party Central Committee and President Ho worked and reported to them on my work. After that I returned to Beijing on November 5, bringing with me a letter of the Vietnamese Party Central Committee to the CPC Central Committee. I informed Comrade Liu Shaoqi of all specific issues.

In early 1951 I left Beijing for Viet Nam to attend the Second National Party Congress.

2. The Second National Party Congress (February 1951)

The Second National Party Congress was held from February 11 to 19, 1951 in the jungles of Tuyen Quang Province. The Congress was also known as the Second National Congress of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party and the Inaugural Congress of the Labour Party of Viet Nam. To explain why it should be like that, we need to briefly review the 21-year history of the Vietnamese Party from its founding to its later development.

On February 3, 1930, under the direction of President Ho, three communist organizations in Viet Nam were merged into the Communist Party of Viet Nam. At the end of 1930, in compliance with the views of the Comintern, the Party Central Committee changed the Party's name to the Communist Party

of Indo-China. This, in fact, was the Communist Party for the three countries of Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos, countries all engaged in a common struggle against the French colonialists. When the Nghe Tinh Soviet Movement was launched, the French colonialists cruelly suppressed it, and the revolutionary movement receded to a low ebb. In 1935 the Overseas Headquarters of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party held a conference in Macao to consolidate the ranks of the Party. Known as the Macao Conference, it was in fact the First National Congress of the Party. The deputies elected Comrade Ha Huy Tap General Secretary of the Party to replace Comrade Tran Phu, who had laid down his life in struggle. In September 1945, when the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam was founded, Viet Nam was divided into two parts: the part south of the 16th parallel was taken over by the British army and that north of the 16th parallel by Chiang Kai-shek's troops; and the bulk of Cambodia and Laos was occupied by the French army once again. In order to cope with this complicated situation, on November 11, 1945, the Indo-Chinese Communist Party proclaimed its own dissolution. Nevertheless, the Party still existed and led the revolution in the name of the Viet Minh Front. Through four years of heroic struggle against French aggressors, particularly after the triumph of the Border Campaign, Viet Nam had become linked up with China, the Soviet Union and other countries in the socialist camp. "The new changes in the international and domestic situation requires that our Party resume its activities openly so as to lead, organize and mobilize the entire Party and nation to resolutely defeat the French colonialists and the American invaders and win complete victory in the war." Therefore, the Party Central Committee decided to convene the Second National Congress.

Several important things happened at this Congress. Among these were the founding of the Vietnamese Labour Party and the emphasis placed on the great significance of the experience of the Chinese revolution and Mao Zedong Thought as related to the Vietnamese revolution.

—The Founding of the Vietnamese Labour Party.

"Since the founding of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, our Party has become the ruling party. There are changes in the nature and form of its political activities, which are now quite different from what they were during the period when we were involved in doing underground work. In order to be able to meet the new circumstances and the new requirements of the revolution, the Party has to make some appropriate additions and revisions with regard to its Constitution. Since its founding, the Communist Party of Indo-China was the common party of the working class of Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos. After the outbreak of the national war of resistance, people's democracy has existed side by side with semi-colonialism and semi-feudalism in Viet Nam. Although in Cambodia two-thirds of its territory is liberated and in Laos there are vast liberated areas in Upper, Central and Lower Laos, the society of the two countries is, generally speaking, still colonial and feudal in nature and in many places in Laos classes are yet to be distinctly differentiated. Therefore, though the three nations on the Indo-China peninsula are faced with a common enemy, the French aggressors and American invaders, and are found in a new cycle of world war and revolution, they differ in terms of historical backgrounds and national conditions. It follows that each of the three countries needs to establish its own working class party and to draw up programme of revolution based on its own national conditions.

"This situation urgently requires the convocation of the Second National Congress of the Party at which to formulate a Party programme and strategy for the period of national people's democratic revolution, to decide that the Party switch to open activity, to revise the Party Constitution so as to suit the new situation and new tasks of the revolution, and to elect a new Central Executive Committee to direct the work of the entire Party and nation on behalf of the National Congress." (From *Thirty-five Years of Struggle of Our Party*, Vol. II, Vietnamese ed., pp. 95-96.)

So, the founding of the Labour Party of Viet Nam was

the end of the Communist Party of Indo-China. At the same time, it encouraged Cambodia and Laos to set up political parties of their own to lead the revolution in accordance with their respective historical backgrounds and national conditions.

—Emphasis Placed on the Great Significance of the Experience of the Chinese Revolution and Mao Zedong Thought as Related to the Vietnamese Revolution.

Prior to this Congress, the Communist and Workers' Parties of various countries regarded it as their task to study the Russian revolution and Marxist-Leninist theory. Since the triumph of the Chinese revolution, these Parties included in their study the Chinese revolution and Mao Zedong Thought. Take the Vietnamese revolution for example. Before the August Revolution in 1945, President Ho, applying the experience of the Chinese revolution to the realities of the Vietnamese revolution, established liberated areas, built up an army, set up governments, formed a national united front, waged a struggle to consolidate political power, and brought the war against French aggressors to a stalemate. At the Second National Congress of the Party greater importance was attached to the study of the experience of the Chinese revolution and Mao Zedong Thought, which was made a task for all the Party membership. The new Party Constitution stipulated: "The Labour Party of Viet Nam regards integration of the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin and of Mao Zedong Thought with the revolutionary practice in Viet Nam as the basis of the Party's thinking and the guiding principle for all actions." This was of special significance, manifesting the close, militant friendship between Viet Nam and China.

At the Congress, "In front of the deputies were hung portraits of Stalin and Mao Zedong under the portraits of Marx, Engels and Lenin." (See *Nhan Dan* (*The People*), March 11, 1951) The telegram sent by the Congress of the Labour Party of Viet Nam to the Chinese Communist Party read in part, "The Labour Party of Viet Nam will follow the example

of the heroic Communist Party of China and study Mao Zedong Thought, which has guided the Chinese people and various nations in East Asia in their struggles to win independence." (See *Nhan Dan*, March 11, 1951)

The Chinese revolution and Mao Zedong Thought had widespread and profound influence among our Party membership and our people in their struggle to defend the Fatherland. An article carried in *Nhan Dan* on January 2, 1956 to introduce the book *Our War of Resistance Is Bound to Win* written by Truong Chinh stated, "Our Party has a correct political line and military line based on Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought." It added, "Following the directives of President Ho, Comrade Truong Chinh creatively applied Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought to his analysis of the laws governing the Vietnamese people's revolutionary war and set forth the strategic principles and tactics for a protracted war of resistance."

An editorial in *Nhan Dan* on January 28, 1951 entitled "Congratulations to the Chinese Communist Party on Its Great Victory in the Past 30 Years" read, "In congratulating the Communist Party of China on its victory in the struggle of the past 30 years, we should learn from its experience in armed struggle, financial and economic work, united front policies and the establishment of people's democratic government."

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the triumph of Dien Bien Phu Campaign, Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap said in his article entitled "The Experience the Vietnamese People Have Gained in Their Historic Victories in the Dien Bien Phu Campaign and in Their Sacred War of Resistance Against French Imperialism and American Invaders", which was carried in *Nhan Dan* on May 7, 1964, "Since victory was won in the Chinese revolution in 1950, better conditions have been provided for our army and people to study the valuable experience of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and Mao Zedong's military thinking. This is an important factor that has contributed to the rapid growth of our army and particularly to the victories our army won in the Autumn and Winter

Operations of 1953 and 1954 and in the great Dien Bien Phu Campaign...."

By briefly reviewing the facts, we can see how ungrateful and degraded those people became when they advocated invading Cambodia, dominating Laos and opposing China in betrayal of President Ho's line.

3. The Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee Convened to Rectify Deviations That Occurred During the Agrarian Reform (September 1956)

The agrarian reform was a strategic decision to eliminate the feudal system of exploitation in rural areas and improve the living conditions of the peasants so as to help bring about victory in the anti-French war.

In February 1953 the Central Committee of the Labour Party of Viet Nam adopted the Land Programme in order that the agrarian reform would proceed along the right track. In December 1953 the Party Central Committee proposed that the National Assembly adopt an Agrarian Reform Law and have it implemented all over North Viet Nam. At the same time, an Agrarian Reform Committee was set up to provide guidance.

1) *The Party's Land Programme.* Its basic principles were as follows:

—Confiscate the land, draught oxen, farm tools and other property of traitors.

—Confiscate or requisition the land, draught oxen, farm tools and other property of reactionary landlords and local despots (depending on the seriousness of the crimes they committed).

—Purchase by the state the land, draught oxen, farm tools from ordinary landlords and landlords who took part in the anti-French war. These people along with democrats shall enjoy appropriate treatment.

—The land, draught oxen, farm tools, houses and other property of the rich peasants are not to be taken away from them.

—Firmly protect the middle peasants' ownership of their

land, draught oxen, farm tools, houses and other property.

—The interests of those who rent small plots of land to others for lack of labour power as a result of their participating in the war of resistance or engaging in other professions are not to be encroached upon.

—In implementing the agrarian reform, the Party's line of mobilizing the masses in the rural areas must be adhered to. This means to rely on the poor peasants and farm labourers, closely unite with the middle peasants and ally with the rich peasants in an effort to eliminate the feudal system step by step, increase production and carry on vigorous resistance.

2) *The Agrarian Reform Law Adopted by the National Assembly*. Some of the specific provisions were as follows:

—Matters concerning confiscating, requisitioning and purchasing of land (Chapter 2).

—Matters concerning land distribution (Chapter 3).

—Departments for carrying out agrarian reform (Chapter 4). Under this chapter there were two strict stipulations for preventing the occurrence of deviations in the course of the land reform. For example, Article 34 stipulates, "Class status shall be assessed through discussion at conferences of peasant representatives. The person concerned must attend the discussion." Article 36 says, "Those who violate the law shall be brought to trial. Unlawful arrest, execution, assault and infliction of corporal punishment are strictly forbidden."

3) *The Agrarian Reform Committee was established* with Truong Chinh, General Secretary of the Party Central Committee, as its Chairman and Hoang Quoc Viet and Le Van Luong, members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, and Ho Viet Thang, member of the Party Central Committee, as its members. It was absolutely correct and necessary for the Party Central Committee to formulate the principles and policies mentioned above for agrarian reform and to set up a guidance committee composed of principal leaders. In the course of implementing the principles and policies, however, serious deviations occurred owing to Truong Chinh's patriarchal behaviour and his "Left" thinking. For

instance, the scope of attack was extended to include the middle and rich peasants and lessors of small plots of land and to grass-roots organizations of the Party.

I still remember that at the Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee held in 1955 the Agrarian Reform Committee submitted its report on agrarian reform at experimental places in Thai Nguyen Province led by Hoang Quoc Viet. In that province 500 landlords escaped being classified as such and 400 people were wrongly classified as landlords. The members of the Central Committee pointed out that those who had escaped being classified as landlords could be classified as such later on, but those who were mistakenly classified had lost all their property and fallen into disrepute. This had sown enmity among the people, which was extremely harmful. Nevertheless, the Agrarian Reform Committee paid no heed to this criticism; on the contrary, it decided to allow the agrarian reform teams in different places to execute despotic landlords as a means to enhance the peasants' prestige and power. Such executions started in Thai Nguyen Province and extended to many places and were regarded as an effective method to enhance the peasants' prestige and power.

As time went on, the agrarian reform movement turned into a Party-wide rectification movement. "Anti-Party elements" and "saboteurs who had sneaked into the Party" were found everywhere because emphasis was not placed on objective evidence but on confessions extracted by torture. Being the most powerful, the grass-roots organizations of the Party in Nghe An and Ha Tinh suffered the worst damage.

Before this happened, the Party Central Committee had all along trusted Truong Chinh, Hoang Quoc Viet and Le Van Luong. Because of the grave mistakes they had made in Nghe An and Ha Tinh and the strong reaction of the masses that had reached Hanoi, the Party Central Committee held a special emergency meeting to look into the results of the agrarian reform and begin to correct the mistakes that had been made.

The Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee to

discuss ways of rectifying the mistakes that had been made in the course of agrarian reform was held in September 1956 and lasted almost one month, the longest meeting since the founding of the Party. Nearly all the members of the Party Central Committee agreed that the Agrarian Reform Committee had failed to correctly implement the Party's policies on agrarian reform. For instance:

—The Party advocated waging struggle by reasoning things out, with a view to raising the peasants' political awareness and making the landlords understand that it was wrong to exploit the peasants. However, the agrarian reform teams did not try to prevent the peasants from vilifying those who were accused of being landlords, allowing daughter-in-laws to hurl insults on their mother-in-laws and sons to abuse their parents. Those who were labelled as landlords had no way of defending themselves, except pleading guilty. Some of them were kept under surveillance and given no food to eat, so that their neighbours and relatives, who were sympathetic to them, would secretly gave them some sweet potatoes or cassavas.

—The Party advocated giving proper considerations to families that had made contributions to the revolution and to landlords who had participated in the war of resistance. However, the agrarian reform teams regarded them all as landlords who had committed crimes against the peasants and denounced them.

—The Party advocated persuading those who had small plots of land, such as peddlers and workers who did not till their land for a living, to return their land to the peasants and not regarding them as landlords. But, the work teams did just the opposite and aroused the peasants to abuse them. So it was common for those who had three to five *fen* of land to be classified as landlords. The middle peasants were part of the peasants and should be closely united with, and the rich peasants should be allied with in the agrarian reform. But quite a lot of them were classified as landlords, their land, houses and other property were confiscated, and they suffered various indignities and were not allowed to defend themselves in the

least.

Things went worse when the focus of work was switched to rectifying Party organizations. Not only were the middle peasants and rich peasants attacked, even grass-roots Party organizations came under fire. Most of those who had joined the Party in 1930 or who had joined the Association of Young Revolutionary Comrades in 1925 and 1926 became the target of attack, being denounced and thrown into prison. Particularly in Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces where Dang Thi was in charge, prisons were numerous and almost all the grass-roots Party organizations were destroyed.

The mistakes mentioned above were fully exposed at the Plenary Session. Although Chairman of the Agrarian Reform Committee Truong Chinh found it difficult to defend himself, he lamely argued that the agrarian reform was a tremendous success because the peasants had obtained land, refusing to squarely face his mistakes. Neither did Hoang Quoc Viet want to admit his mistakes. Only Le Van Luong, Director of the Organization Department of the Party Central Committee was forthright in admitting the mistakes he had made in the rectification movement. Although President Ho was not a member of the Agrarian Reform Committee, yet as Chairman of the Party, he made a severe self-criticism of his inadequate supervision over the work and maintained that the Party should adopt resolute measures to correct the mistakes that had been made.

As a matter of course, the Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee should draw up a resolution which would summarize our experience gained in the agrarian reform. However, as Truong Chinh, General Secretary of the Party Central Committee and Chairman of the Agrarian Reform Committee, could not agree with everyone else on major problems, none of the proposed drafts of resolution was adopted by the Session. The meeting, as it had already lasted too long, had to be ended after decisions were made to resolutely correct mistakes and to take disciplinary action against a few leading members. The resolution of the Session had to be shelved, and Truong Chinh

was asked to prepare a draft for the next plenary session.

As regards disciplinary action, the Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee decided:

—to remove Truong Chinh of his post as General Secretary of the Party Central Committee and replace him with President Ho for the time being;

—to remove Hoang Quoc Viet as member of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee;

—to remove Le Van Luong as member of the Political Bureau and Director of the Organization Department of the Party Central Committee; and

—to remove Ho Viet Thang as member of the Party Central Committee.

The participants elected Nguyen Duy Trinh, Le Thanh Nghi and Hoang Van Hoan members of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee. They also suggested that a new General Secretary should be found, as President Ho had to be in charge of overall administrative work in his capacity as both Party President and General Secretary.

Le Duan had been working in the South. He was the person who proposed in a letter to the Central Committee that agrarian reform be carried out in order to improve the lives of the peasants. Therefore, comrades of the Political Bureau thought he was the right person for the post of the General Secretary to assist President Ho in his work. Before long, he was transferred to the North.

When Le Duan came to Hanoi towards the end of 1956 or at the beginning of 1957, the Central Committee appointed him Acting General Secretary to assist President Ho in dealing with the day-to-day work of the Central Executive Committee of the Party.

Unlike Truong Chinh who sat in his office all day long, Le Duan kept extensive contacts with Party cadres and democrats. At meetings of the Political Bureau and the Central Committee, he listened attentively to the opinions of others

and seldom expressed his own views. He said that since he had just come to the North and was new here, he had a lot to learn, particularly about the economic situation in the North.

At a meeting of the Political Bureau Le Duan expressed his views on correcting mistakes made in the agrarian reform. He analysed that mistakes had been made in the reform chiefly because the agrarian reform teams, instead of Party organizations, were playing the leading role. In China, only agrarian reform teams were relied on in carrying out the reform after Central and South China was liberated because the Party organizations there were too weak and in some places there was no Party organization at all. But the situation in Viet Nam was different. After many years of struggle, the Party organizations were deeply rooted among the people. However, during the agrarian reform, the Party organizations were not trusted; instead, the grass-roots Party organizations were attacked. Convinced by his analysis, the Political Bureau held that it would be appropriate for Le Duan to draft the resolution in which to sum up the Party's experience in the Agrarian Reform. But Le Duan believed it would be better for Truong Chinh to do it because he was the person in charge of the agrarian reform. Since that time, Truong Chinh had never been able to produce a draft, not even at the Third National Party Congress that was held at the end of 1960. Not all Party members understood why no resolution had been adopted at such an important Plenary Session of the Central Committee. What's more, because Truong Chinh was equivocal in his attitude towards the correction of mistakes made in the agrarian reform, unjust and false cases had not been redressed; those whose class status had been wrongly determined were not rehabilitated in public; and those who had become hostile to each other during the agrarian reform remained so ever since. However, Truong Chinh enjoyed high prestige both inside and outside the Party, as he had adhered to the policies and line formulated by President Ho before and after the August Revolution and had also made great contributions to the founding of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and to the victory in the anti-French war. But

his prestige declined as a result of the mistakes he had made in the agrarian reform movement and his equivocal attitude towards the correction of deviations. Particularly since Le Duan tried to belittle him behind his back by innuendo, many cadres and Party members began to have faith in Le Duan, relinquishing their trust in Truong Chinh, who perhaps were not aware of it yet.

I returned to Beijing after the conclusion of the Plenary Session of the Central Committee at which correction of the mistakes made in agrarian reform had been discussed. Premier Zhou Enlai showed great concern over the matter. As soon as he saw me, he asked me if the problems that had occurred in the agrarian reform in Viet Nam had anything to do with the Chinese advisers. I replied that China's experience in agrarian reform had been fine for us. It was the Agrarian Reform Committee of Viet Nam that had made mistakes. For instance, too many people were classified as landlords; in many places, the scope of attack was extended to cover the rich and middle peasants, lessors of small plots of land, who made a living by other means than tilling the land, and those landlords who participated in the war of resistance and who had made contributions to the revolution, and particularly, the grass-roots Party organizations. All these mistakes were made by the Agrarian Reform Committee of Viet Nam, and not by the Chinese advisers.

The mistakes made by Truong Chinh in the agrarian reform had tragic consequences for him, whereas they made a gold opportunity for Le Duan to form a faction gradually to deviate from the line formulated by President Ho and, thus, lead the country down the road to disaster.

Part Seven

THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION AND LE DUAN'S BETRAYAL

(1957-1979)

In April 1957, the Party Central Committee decided to have Comrade Nguyen Khang replace me as Vietnamese Ambassador to China and Comrade Tran Do as Vietnamese Ambassador to Korea. I was recalled home to take a new post.

During that period, the Party embarked on work on many fronts. I was assigned to work for the National Assembly as an assistant to Ton Duc Thang, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, who was advanced in years and was in poor health. I had been elected member of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly as early as in October 1946.

At the Hanoi Party Congress held in 1961 I was elected Secretary of the Hanoi Municipal Party Committee. Before long, the Central Committee decided that I leave this post to serve as Director of its International Liaison Department.

Except when I visited other countries as head or member of the Party and government delegation or of the National Assembly delegation, or when I went abroad to spend vacations at health resorts, my political activities had been closely connected with the Political Bureau of the Central Committee ever since 1957.

As a rule, the Political Bureau held a meeting once a week, which was presided over by President Ho or, in his

absence, by Le Duan. When the Central Committee held its plenary session, members of the Political Bureau were all members of its presidium. Chairmanship of this presidium was on a rotating basis, with each member of the Political Bureau taking a turn for one day or one meeting only.

From 1957 through 1979, I often worked together with Le Duan and so I knew full well what kind of a person he really was.

Le Duan was a clever person, experienced and well versed in political theory. But, he was an inordinately ambitious, dishonest person. He liked flattering remarks and not straightforward talk. He behaved not like an elder brother among revolutionary ranks. This was not anything inconceivable, because all the revolutionaries had been born in a feudal and colonial old society and even after they had joined the revolution they still had some ideological remnants of the old society. Yet, revolutionaries should sincerely remould themselves while transforming society. In the course of their practice in the revolution, they should gradually become persons of fine revolutionary calibre and moral values, who wholeheartedly serve the interests of the revolution, the Fatherland and the people.

After working together with Le Duan for over 20 years, I could see clearly that Le Duan was not really interested in remoulding himself. Since he ignored the process of self-remoulding as required by the revolution, it was natural that he gradually betrayed the revolution.

Le Duan's betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution occurred against an international background in which Nikita Khrushchov had usurped the power of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in September 1953, which caused a split in the socialist camp and the international communist movement; at home President Ho remained ill during these years and died before the liberation of South Viet Nam.

Le Duan's betrayal not only distressed the Vietnamese people, but also saddened the people who had done their utmost to help the Vietnamese people in their anti-imperialist struggle to win national independence as well as the kindheart-

ed people who had so ardently hoped that peace would prevail over the world and that the Vietnamese people would have enough food and clothing and live a happy life.

Sometime between the end of 1956 and early 1957, Le Duan was transferred to the North. In the first few years, when he had not rallied enough adherents to his side or consolidated his position in the Party, he appeared unassuming and easy to get along with. But, at the end of 1960, when he was elected First Secretary of the Central Committee at the Third National Congress of the Labour Party of Viet Nam, he began to deviate gradually from the line formulated by the Party and President Ho. Not until the South was completely liberated did he openly betray the Vietnamese revolution. To be specific, taking advantage of the Fourth National Congress of the Labour Party held at the end of 1976, he had 23 of the 71 members squeezed out of the new Central Committee; he forced the Central Committee to adopt an anti-China resolution in July 1978; he had a treaty of friendship and co-operation signed with the Soviet Union in November 1978, which was, in reality, an anti-China military alliance; and he sent 200,000 Vietnamese troops to invade Kampuchea in December 1978.

In order to explain the process of Le Duan's betrayal of the revolution, this part describes some relevant events that took place in those years.

I. Events which occurred in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin and the attitude of the Labour Party of Viet Nam towards them.

II. Events which occurred after the Soviet Union started to provide military aid to Viet Nam in its war against U.S. aggression.

III. Liberation of the South, reunification of the Fatherland and Le Duan's role in these two events.

IV. The Vietnamese revolution and Le Duan's betrayal.

V. My determination to leave the Fatherland and continue the revolution.

VI. Relevant documents.

I. Events Which Occurred in the Soviet Union After the Death of Stalin and the Attitude of the Labour Party of Viet Nam Towards Them

Prior to the Third National Congress of the Labour Party of Viet Nam, something unexpected happened in the Soviet Union. Soon after the death of Stalin in March 1953, Khrushchov toppled Malenkov and became the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Subsequently, a series of events which seriously impaired unity in the socialist camp and the international communist movement took place.

1. In his concluding speech at the Twentieth National Congress of the CPSU held in February 1956, Khrushchov proposed making the concept of "peaceful competition with imperialism" the general line for the various socialist countries and the concept of "moving towards socialism through the parliamentary road" the general line for the Communist and Workers' Parties in the capitalist countries. At a closed meeting held during this Congress, Khrushchov delivered a secret report, in which he tried to discredit Stalin or, in fact, to discredit the Soviet Union. It happened that the capitalist countries headed by U.S. imperialism were trying by hook or by crook to calumniate the Soviet Union, so Khrushchov's secret report provided them with a most powerful weapon. As soon as it got hold of this report, the United States published it.

2. In June 1957 Khrushchov accused Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich of being members of an anti-Party clique. In fact, this was a frame-up made by Khrushchov in his attempt to usurp the power of the Party.

3. In celebration of the October Revolution in November 1957, the conference of Communist and Workers' Parties of socialist countries was held in Moscow, which President Ho

attended. The conference declared,

"Relationship between the socialist countries is built on the principle of equality, mutual respect for territorial integrity, independence, national sovereignty, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. This is an important principle." (See *Nhan Dan*, November 24, 1957.)

4. In 1959, when a border conflict erupted between China and India, Khrushchov tried to force China to make concessions to India and met with China's diametrical opposition, for the borderline under dispute was delineated by British Governor in India MacMahon himself and China had never recognized it.

5. In June 1960 the conference of the Communist and Workers' Parties of the socialist countries was held in Bucharest, capital of Romania. Khrushchov openly attacked the Chinese Communist Party, compelling Peng Zhen, the CPC representative, to refute him on the spot.

6. In July 1960 Khrushchov unilaterally announced withdrawal of all the Soviet experts working in China, tore up more than 600 agreements and contracts signed with China and launched a large-scale anti-China campaign.

What Khrushchov had done was to show to the world the split in the international communist movement and the differences between the two socialist countries—the Soviet Union and China. The Labour Party of Viet Nam was deeply concerned about the situation. On August 10, 1960, a delegation headed by President Ho and including Xuan Thuy and myself hurried off to the Soviet Union in an attempt to persuade Khrushchov to maintain friendly relations with China. But we failed because Khrushchov stubbornly sticked to his anti-China policy. Despite this, President Ho was still in favour of protecting the prestige of the Soviet Union, regarded it as the **"elder brother" in the international communist movement and tried to unite with the Soviet Union, China and other countries in the socialist camp**. All these ideas are contained in the documents of the Third National Congress of the Labour Party

of Viet Nam, which was held from September 5 to 10, 1960.

After 30 years of hard struggle, it was the first time that the Party had convened its national congress in the capital, Hanoi. The Congress was attended by representatives from various socialist countries, from major Communist Parties of France, India, Indonesia and Canada, and from parties that were still operating underground. The goal of the Congress was to **"strive for the building of socialism in the North and reunification of the Fatherland"** and to **"cement solidarity of the countries in the socialist camp and unity of the international communist movement"**.

The Congress elected a Central Committee composed of 71 members, of whom 43 were full members and 28 alternate members. Then, the new Central Committee elected Comrade Ho Chi Minh President of the Central Committee and Le Duan First Secretary of the Central Committee. The Plenary Session elected 11 full members of the Political Bureau: Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, Truong Chinh, Pham Van Dong, Pham Hung, Vo Nguyen Giap, Le Duc Tho, Nguyen Chi Thanh, Nguyen Duy Trinh, Le Thanh Nghi and Hoang Van Hoan, and two alternate members: Tran Quoc Hoan and Van Tien Dung.

The Congress was ended in high spirits. All of us expected that Le Duan would make some headway in uniting with the Soviet Union, China and the other countries of the socialist camp, and uniting the international communist movement. But it turned out before long that he began to lean to Khrushchov, deviating farther and farther from this lofty mission.

After the Third National Party Congress, President Ho led a Party and Government Delegation to Moscow to participate in the celebrations for the October Revolution. Taking advantage of this occasion, Khrushchov suddenly proposed to convene a conference of the Communist and Workers' Parties to discuss questions concerning the international communist movement. At this conference, some delegates frankly voiced their views and criticized Khrushchov in a mild way. A joint declaration containing constructive proposals was adopted by

the delegates after they had finally reached a consensus. It was stated in the declaration, "**All Marxist-Leninist parties are independent and equal. Proceeding from the specific conditions of their own countries, they formulate policies in accordance with Marxist-Leninist tenets and support each other at the same time**." (See *Nhan Dan*, December 6, 1960.) This indicated that the various fraternal parties in the international communist movement desired to decide themselves on their own party line and that they did not want to follow the baton of any other party.

However, Khrushchov kept trying to force some fraternal parties to oppose China, thus widening the split in the international communist movement day by day. This was reflected in Congresses of several Parties, namely, the National Congresses of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the Czechoslovak Communist Party, all held at the end of 1962, as well as the National Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany held in early 1963. In the political reports delivered by the Central Committees of these Parties China was openly criticized by name and the Chinese Communist Party delegates had to fight back at these Congresses. As head of the Delegation of the Labour Party of Viet Nam attending the above Congresses, I was deeply grieved at the discord occurring in the socialist camp. I reported what had happened in detail to President Ho and the Political Bureau of the Central Committee after my return to Hanoi.

Disintegration also occurred among those fraternal parties that had not yet come to power in their own countries either in the East or in the West. The so-called "orthodox" parties followed Khrushchov in opposing China; the "Marxist" parties supported China and opposed Khrushchov. Holding high the anti-revisionist banner, the "Marxist" parties believed that when the people all over the world were waging a struggle against imperialism, Khrushchov had poured cold water on them by maintaining the concept of "peaceful competition with imperialism and moving towards socialism by parliamentary road"—a notion which had absolutely nothing in common with

Marxism-Leninism. The Labour Party of Viet Nam discussed this situation at several inner-Party meetings and reached a consensus at the end of 1963, maintaining that the Marxist-Leninist principles had to be strictly adhered to and that the Khrushchov-type of "coexistence" was unacceptable when the people in South Viet Nam were fighting against U.S. imperialism and the puppet government, both of which had violated the Geneva Agreement and were ruthless in their suppression of those people in favour of reunification of the Fatherland. At this time, President Ho proposed convening the Ninth Plenary Session of the Central Committee to discuss the issue of opposing revisionism.

Le Duan had travelled to and fro between Hanoi and Moscow several times in the previous few years, and Khrushchov had tried by all possible means to win him over to oppose China. So when the Political Bureau decided to convene the Plenary Session of the Central Committee to discuss the issue of opposing revisionism, Le Duan shifted the responsibility of drafting the report to Truong Chinh.

The Plenary Session was convened at the end of 1963.

At the Session, the members of the Central Committee held heated discussions after hearing the report delivered by Truong Chinh. To Huu listed ten indictments, sternly reprimanding the Soviet Union. Le Duan was the only one who did not say a single word. After many days of discussion, a resolution was adopted at the Session. In the draft of the resolution Khrushchov was criticized by name. But as Le Duan proposed not mentioning Khrushchov's name, the Central Committee finally agreed to his proposal. The Central Committee also decided not to publish this resolution but only to have it studied inside the Party. The gist of the resolution was the same as that in the communiqué carried in *Nhan Dan* on January 21, 1964:

The Labour Party of Viet Nam strives to safeguard the purity of Marxism-Leninism, opposes revisionism and

Right opportunism, which are the main danger to the international communist movement, and it also opposes dogmatism and sectarianism.... In the struggle against modern revisionism, our Party takes a firm Marxist-Leninist stand and resolutely upholds the Moscow Declaration of 1957 and the Moscow Statement of 1960.... Resolutely combating modern revisionism is not only an internationalist obligation of our Party, it is also an imperative requirement for safeguarding the unity of our Party and the correct line of the Third National Party Congress as well as for promoting the revolutionary cause of the people all over the country.

This resolution was the outcome of the struggle inside our Party which had begun with Khrushchov's public attack on China in 1960. A few days after the resolution was adopted, the Soviet Union invited the Labour Party of Viet Nam to send a delegation to visit it. The Political Bureau immediately sent one with Le Duan as head of the delegation and Le Duc Tho, Hoang Van Hoan, To Huu and Nguyen Van Kinh as its members. On January 27, 1964, the delegation departed. We stopped over in Beijing, where Chairman Mao Zedong held a banquet in our honour. During the banquet, Le Duan explained to Chairman Mao that we were going to the Soviet Union to expound the stand and views of our Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was going to do the same to us, and that our Political Bureau and President Ho had asked us not to publish a joint communiqué. Chairman Mao Zedong expressed his appreciation to the Central Committee of the Labour Party of Viet Nam for its concern over the international communist movement and unity between China and the Soviet Union. He wished the delegation every success.

On January 31, 1964 the Vietnamese Labour Party Delegation arrived in Moscow.

After several days of talks between the Delegation of the Soviet Communist Party headed by Suslov and the Vietnamese

Labour Party Delegation, the Soviet side put forward a draft of joint communiqué, which the Vietnamese delegation, following the explicit instruction of President Ho, refused to sign. It did so also because the contents of the communiqué were at variance with the anti-revisionist line laid down at the Ninth Plenary Session.

Being displeased, the Soviet Union booked four air tickets for the delegation (Nguyen Van Kinh, the Vietnamese Ambassador to the Soviet Union, stayed in the Soviet Union after the talks were over). Under normal circumstances, it ought to have provided the delegation with a special plane. While we were waiting in the Moscow airport lounge, the Soviet side asked to have a talk with Le Duan alone somewhere away from the lounge, who signed the joint communiqué with the Soviet Union himself. Back in the lounge, he explained that it would have been impolite not to sign. I asked him at once why he had done that against President Ho's instruction. He said that he would bear the responsibility before the Political Bureau and President Ho for having signed the communiqué.

Before long, a Soviet protocol official came to inform us that the Soviet side had arranged a special plane for us to fly to Beijing. It was no special plane pure and simple: it was the product of a business transaction.

After the delegation returned to Hanoi, Le Duan read carefully the editorial entitled "Strengthen Unity, Heighten the Militant Will and Push Our Cause Forward to New Successes" carried in *Nhan Dan* on January 21, 1964. One passage of the editorial read:

> **The Ninth Plenary Session of the Central Committee was an important session at which ideas were exchanged. The resolution of the Central Committee is the theoretical basis for unifying the thinking and action of the entire Party and nation.**

Another paragraph read:

> **In essence the mistake of revisionism lies in distorting Marxism-Leninism and stripping it of its basic tenets, in**

distorting the Moscow Declaration of 1957 and the Moscow Statement of 1960 and stripping them of their revolutionary principles, in advocating conciliation between different classes and co-operation with imperialism, obliterating the line of demarcation between the enemy, the friend and ourselves, and in sowing discord in the socialist camp and the international communist movement.

On January 29 of the same year *Nhan Dan* carried a statement of the Communist Party of Indonesia which called for: "**Marxists and Leninists all over the world unite in their continued efforts to smash revisionism**."

After reading these articles, Le Duan immediately summoned Hoang Tung, Editor-in-Chief of *Nhan Dan*, and warned him that if his newspaper continued to carry such articles he would be dismissed from his post. Hoang admitted his mistakes and promised to print no more articles of that sort in future.

As stated above, the signing of the joint communiqué with the Soviet Union and the order forbidding *Nhan Dan* to print certain articles in fact totally ran counter to the Central Committee's anti-revisionist resolution, wallowing in revisionism, "**advocating conciliation between different classes and co-operation with imperialism ... and sowing discord in the socialist camp and the international communist movement**."

The policy of co-operating with imperialism at the expense of principle did not in the slightest serve to reduce the cruelty of imperialism.

On August 5, 1964 the United States fabricated the so-called Tonkin Gulf Incident and dispatched planes to bombard the cities of Vinh (Nghe An), Gianh (Quang Binh) and Hon Gai (Quang Ninh). China and the Soviet Union reacted quite differently to this incident:

On August 6, the Chinese government issued a statement saying, "**The Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and China are neighbours as close as lips and teeth, and the Vietnamese people are dear brothers of the Chinese people. Aggression by the**

United States against the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam means aggression against China. The Chinese people will not sit back and watch; they will lend a helping hand. The debts of blood incurred by the United States to the Vietnamese people must be repaid."

On August 9, Comrades Zhou Enlai, Lu Dingyi, Luo Ruiqing, Huang Yanpei, Lin Feng, Guo Moruo and Liao Chengzhi attended a mass rally of 100,000 residents in Beijing. It happened that To Huu and I were stopping over in Beijing on our way back from our visit to Cuba, so we were invited to attend the rally. A message to President Ho was read at the rally, expressing the determination of the Chinese people to support Viet Nam. The message read in part:

> **Viet Nam and China are neighbours as close as lips and teeth. Peoples of our two countries are brothers sharing weal and woe. Aggression by the United States against the Vietnamese people means aggression against the Chinese people. The Chinese people will not sit back and watch; they will lend a helping hand.... No matter what happens, the 650 million Chinese people will stand forever with their Vietnamese brothers....**

On August 10, 1.8 million people in Shanghai, 100,000 people in Fuzhou, and people in Hohhot, capital of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, in Lhasa, capital of Tibet Autonomous Region, on Hainan Island and in other cities held parades to demonstrate their support for Viet Nam.

From August 7 to 15, 1964 *Nhan Dan* covered these demonstrations at great length.

Unlike China, the Soviet government didn't show much interest in the incident, except that the Soviet news agency made a statement which read:

> **The Soviet authorities resolutely condemn aggression by the United States in the Tonkin Gulf. This act of aggression has further deteriorated the already tense situation in Southeast Asia. It is possible that this act and other stupid acts or provocation in this region will lead the recent**

troublesome incident to military conflict, and extremely dangerous consequences will ensue. (See *Nhan Dan*, August 7, 1964.)

To Huu, a poet, was deeply affected by the diametrically different attitudes adopted by the Soviet Union and China and wrote a poem entitled "Diary of Homeward Journey" which was published in *Nhan Dan* on September 2. The following are excerpts from the poem:

Prague

Ill at ease I became,
When all of a sudden news came.
Robbers were invading my homeland,
Bombs were exploding here and there.
U.S. imperialism vainly wants to occupy the seas
and the air space,
With death it will be greeted in my heroic native place!

Moscow

Oh, our Moscow!
Traces of the October Revolution are still there
for people to see.
The red star, wrapped around with heavy fog,
Is still watching our every step every day.
What is Lenin turning over in his mind?
The shadow of the Kremlin wall keeps silent....

Beijing

The day breaks! And it makes me feel so thrilled.
To be on my way home,
I am as joyous as the birds hovering freely in the sky.
Banners are fluttering along the Great Wall,

Our brothers in Beijing are embracing us with
millions of arms.
Celebrating the brilliant victory we won in the war,
I am as overjoyed as a soldier coming from the battle
front.*

Seeing that the Soviet Union was cold and unfriendly to Viet Nam, Pham Van Dong and Le Duc Tho, during the celebrations of the October Revolution, proposed that the Soviet Union send a delegation to Viet Nam to show Soviet support, including military aid, for Viet Nam in its struggle against U.S. imperialism. They told the Soviets that by doing so the prestige of China among the Vietnamese people would be weakened. The Soviet Union accepted their proposal.

On February 6, 1965, the Soviet Union sent a Government Delegation (instead of a Party and Government Delegation as was the usual practice), headed by Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, to pay a visit to Viet Nam. After several rounds of frank talks, Pham Van Dong and Kosygin signed a joint statement of the two governments on February 10. One passage of the joint statement read: "**The two governments have reached a corresponding agreement on taking necessary measures to consolidate the defence capability of Viet Nam.**" (See *Nhan Dan*, February 11, 1965.) Some people might be given to believe that this meant that the Soviet Union would provide Viet Nam with military aid to fight the Americans. However, the wording here was vague.

On April 17, Le Duan and Vo Nguyen Giap flew to Moscow once again to further discuss the military aid to be given by the Soviet Union to Viet Nam. It was after this discussion that the Soviet Union agreed to write in explicit terms in the joint statement: "**The Soviet Union affirms that it is prepared to provide the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam with aid, whenever necessary, to resist U.S. aggression.**" (See *Nhan Dan*, April 19, 1965.)

* The poem was translated and carried on the seventh page of China's *People's Daily*, September 20, 1964, China.

II. Events Which Occurred After the Soviet Union Started to Provide Military Aid to Viet Nam in Its War Against U.S. Aggression

To put it briefly, the events were: Le Duan, who began to slavishly follow the line of the Soviet Union, opposed China and sought to enter into negotiations with the United States to resolve the South Viet Nam issue. These two things were closely interrelated. When North Viet Nam was completely liberated after the signing of the Geneva Agreement in 1954, the Labour Party of Viet Nam exchanged views with the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union and China on the line to be taken for the struggle to reunify Viet Nam as a whole. The Soviet Union proposed that both South and North Viet Nam coexist peacefully and, at the same time, compete with each other in the economic sphere and that since the North was economically superior over the South, the South would be unified into the North. China offered us its experience gained in work in enemy-occupied areas: "To work underground for a long period, maintain ties with the masses, accumulate strength and bide our time." The Central Committee of the Labour Party of Viet Nam was not in favour of the Soviet proposal and, instead, decided to apply China's experience to Viet Nam. In 1956, when Ngo Dinh Diem refused to hold a general election that had for its goal to reunify the Fatherland, and in 1959, when he issued the No. 59/10 Decree to wantonly slaughter the people in the South, the Party Central Committee advocated that the people in the South wage armed struggle to defend themselves. China considered it a reasonable idea and agreed to provide military aid. In 1962 China aided the people in the South with 90,000 rifles and machineguns for them to use in their guerrilla war. As the armed struggle grew in the South, China kept increasing its aid. At that time Le Duan was positive about promoting armed struggle in the South. But after a period of time, persuaded by Khrushchov, he began to

drift with the anti-China tide and hope that the Soviet Union would mediate to bring about a situation in which Viet Nam would hold peace talks with the United States to resolve the South Viet Nam issue.

1. Le Duan Advocated Opposing China

After the signing of the Geneva Agreement on July 20, 1954, the task for Viet Nam in its revolution was to build the North on the one hand and on the other, to carry on the struggle to liberate the South. In building the North, both China and the Soviet Union provided assistance. But only China provided Viet Nam with military aid for armed struggle in the South, while Khrushchov still maintained that the North and the South should coexist in peace and refused to give any military aid to Viet Nam. What's more, the Soviets began to try to brainwash the Vietnamese students studying in the Soviet Union with ideas of peaceful coexistence with imperialism and of opposition to China.

In October 1964, when Khrushchov was toppled, L. I. Brezhnev replaced him as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU. In November the same year, China sent Premier Zhou Enlai and Marshal He Long to participate in the October Revolution anniversary celebrations by way of showing China's desire to improve relations with the Soviet Union. But at the banquet, Suslov, member of the Political Bureau, said bluntly to Premier Zhou Enlai that the Soviet Union's policy towards China had not been made by Khrushchov alone but by the Central Committee of the CPSU. R.Y. Malinovsky, Defence Minister of the Soviet Union, went even farther, telling Marshal He Long in a provocative tone of voice that the Soviet Union had thrown Khrushchov out and China should do the same to Mao Zedong. From this we can see that although Khrushchov had fallen, the Soviet Union never tried to conceal the fact that it was still pursuing its anti-China policy. For instance, while Khrushchov was in power, the Soviet Union deployed over 600,000 troops along the Sino-Soviet border, which was increased to more than one million

in the days of Brezhnev. Moreover, Brezhnev advocated "the theory of limited sovereignty" as the rule governing relationships among fraternal countries.

Therefore, although the Soviet Union's military aid would be beneficial to Viet Nam in its resistance to U.S. aggression, it entailed some dangers. Namely, with Le Duan's co-operation, the Soviet Union would be able to bring Viet Nam away from the correct line formulated by President Ho for the war of resistance, turn Viet Nam into an anti-China base in the south and at the same time create the conditions for controlling Viet Nam and the entire Indo-China region, thus threatening peace in Southeast Asia.

In early 1957, after Le Duan had been transferred from the South to the North by the Central Committee, he became Acting General Secretary of the Party, replacing Truong Chinh who had resigned from that post due to the mistakes he had made in the course of the agrarian reform. Taking advantage of his new position, Le Duan secretly increased the ranks of his followers—vacillating people who veered with the wind and echoed his anti-China views, like Van Tien Dung and Nguyen Van Vinh of the Defence Ministry, To Huu, Tran Quynh and Hoang Tung of the Propaganda Department, Nguyen Co Thack of the Foreign Ministry, Tran Quoc Hoan of the Public Security Ministry, Hoang Quoc Viet of the Procuratorate and Le Duc Tho, Director of the Organization Department of the Central Committee, whom, of all his followers, Le Duan trusted the most. This was a period when Le Duan was gathering his followers and gradually usurping leadership in order to realize his ulterior motives.

After Le Duan had signed the joint communiqué with the Soviet Union in 1964 and opposed the Central Committee's resolution on combating revisionism, he seized the golden opportunity when the Soviet Union began to provide military aid to Viet Nam to closely co-operate with the Soviet leaders in their efforts to step up anti-China activities.

At a time when the Vietnamese people's struggle against U.S. aggression became most fierce, the Soviet Union refused

to provide Viet Nam with advanced weapons under the excuse that if these weapons were given to Viet Nam, the latter would leak the technology to China. Instead, it supplied MIG-23's to India and Egypt.

The Soviet Union could ship some of the weapons and materials straight to Viet Nam by sea to decrease China's transport burdens. But it insisted on transporting these things by rail so that the materials had to be transited through China and be loaded and unloaded there. Consequently, supplies from the Soviet Union, East European countries and China itself were piled at Pingxiang Railway Station in China. Due to a lack of loading and unloading equipment as well as a poor transportation system in Viet Nam, transportation efficiency was rather low. Le Duan was very clear about this, yet he had a tacit understanding with the Soviet Union and spread the rumour that China was reluctant to transport supplies from the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. Taking the hint given by the Soviet Union, some Western journalists blew the matter up.

In order to explode the rumour, on February 28, 1967, the Vietnamese News Agency, under orders from the Vietnamese Government, issued a statement in the newspapers and on radio to the effect that China had transported the materials supplied by the Soviet Union totally in accordance with the plan and, at the same time, it denounced Western news agencies for spreading malicious rumours. Besides manufacturing rumours, the Soviet Union tried to use every evil means to sow dissension between China and Viet Nam with the help of Le Duan and company.

During his visit to Moscow in 1965, Le Duan gave a talk to the Vietnamese Embassy people and representatives of the Vietnamese students then studying in the Soviet Union, in which he praised the Soviet Union and criticized China's policies. Considering Le Duan's talk at variance with the principles of the Central Committee, some student representatives wrote a report to the Central Committee, in which they

raised more than 40 questions regarding Le Duan's talk. When this report reached the General Office of the Central Committee, Le Duan burned it. So the members of the Political Bureau did not see the report, but they learned about it from the staff members of the documents section. When Le Duan stopped over in Beijing on his way from Moscow, he gave a talk to the Vietnamese Embassy people there, in which he criticized China on many issues. His talk lasted three hours. Nobody said anything. But after his return to Hanoi, he said that Comrade Tran Tu Binh, Vietnamese Ambassador to China, agreed with his views. Later on, when I met with Comrade Tran Tu Binh and other embassy people, I learned that what Le Duan had said was sheer fabrication.

Again in 1965, when Le Duan was still in Moscow, To Huu called a meeting of cadres from North Viet Nam responsible for propaganda and training. At the meeting Tran Quynh criticized some of China's policies. His views were exactly the same as those of Le Duan's in the latter's talks at the Vietnamese Embassies in Moscow and in Beijing.

Le Duan criticized China, saying that the principle of the countryside encircling the cities that China had formulated during its anti-Japanese war and its fight against Chiang Kai-shek and the principle of taking agriculture as the foundation and industry as the leading factor in developing the national economy during the period of economic development were not proletarian but peasant concept. Le Duan thought that in adopting the rural policy of relying on farm labourers, poor and lower-middle peasants China was creating contradictions among the peasants, because, he said, after the agrarian reform, there was no difference among the peasants any longer. In terms of organizational principles, Le Duan's open criticism of China's policies was a serious violation of discipline. No open criticism of the policies of a fraternal party was allowed unless it was approved by the Central Committee, or at least by its Political Bureau, after discussion.

With Le Duan's approval, To Huu's anti-China poem entitled "What Is on My Mind" was published in *Nhan Dan* on

March 13, 1967. The Propaganda Department of the Central Committee did not order to take back this issue of newspaper until President Ho had criticized the poem. However, the newspaper had already been distributed all over the world and so there was no way of taking it back.

In 1967 some distressing events occurred in the Soviet Union. First, when Chinese students studying in the Soviet Union were visiting Lenin's Mausoleum, they were beaten up by Soviet security men, who turned a deaf ear to Soviet on-lookers who shouted to them to stop beating the Chinese students.

The second tragic event also took place in Moscow, when groups of Vietnamese students studying in the Soviet Union went to the American Embassy to demand that the United States stop its aggression against Viet Nam. Although it was a normal and reasonable thing to do, the Soviet security men beat up the Vietnamese students, some of whom were so seriously hurt that it was months before they completely recovered. Later, when he met with the Soviet leaders during his visit to the Soviet Union, Le Duan apologized twice for the student demonstrations. After reading the minutes of these talks, President Ho and other comrades of the Political Bureau thought it was wrong to make such apology.

The third event occurred when the war with the United States became most fierce. Some Vietnamese students and cadres, unwilling to return home to participate in the war of resistance, sought political asylum in the Soviet Union. In disregard of the Vietnamese government's protest and its formal requirement that these students and cadres return to Viet Nam, the Soviet Union granted them political asylum, preventing them from going home. This group of students and cadres numbered as many as 48, among whom were Le Vinh Quoc, a divisional commander, Van Doan, writer for the *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* (*The People's Army*), and Nguyen Minh Can and Tran Minh Viet, members of the Hanoi Municipal Party Committee. One might wonder why the Soviet Union should have done such a thing at such a moment. There can be no

other possible explanation except that the Soviet authorities wanted to keep a group of Vietnamese in the Soviet Union for use in future subversive activities.

The Vietnamese people, who were fighting against U.S. imperialism, naturally felt very angry at the events mentioned above. Yet, Le Duan was indifferent, as if nothing had happened. He continued to extol the Soviet Union and spread his anti-China propaganda.

Why on earth should Le Duan, who had been involved in the revolution for many years, have been so ungrateful to China—a friend who had endured adversity with the Vietnamese people and fought together with them? The fundamental reason was that his anti-China thinking had been planted there by the French colonialists and later firmly anchored there by the Khrushchov revisionists.

As is known to all, in order to consolidate their rule in Viet Nam, the French colonialists tried their utmost to sever the political, economic, cultural and social relations inherent between the peoples of Viet Nam and China. Such relations were clearly manifested in the Vietnamese language, which still bore the stamp of the Chinese language. The French colonialists exaggerated the crimes committed by a few Chinese feudal rulers against Viet Nam as crimes committed by the Chinese nation as a whole. According to their theory, the Chinese nation was a nation which had long been bent on invading other nations. The French used the term "Yellow Peril" to describe aggression by China.

We also know that in the Soviet Union after Khrushchov toppled G. M. Malenkov and usurped Party leadership, he used various means to force the fraternal countries in "the socialist community" and other parties in the international communist movement to follow his baton. In particular, he wanted to expel China from the socialist camp, which occasioned disapproval and evoked opposition throughout the world. When Khrushchov was still in power, people called what he advocated "Khrushchovism" and after he fell, people called it "Khrushchovism without Khrushchov".

Le Duan had sunk deeply into the anti-China quagmire not without cause. His anti-China sentiment did not stem from his fear of "aggression" by China. Following step by step Khrushchov's idea of peaceful coexistence between the South and the North, he was secretly going against President Ho's line of opposing the United States, liberating the South and reunifying the Fatherland. In other words, he counted on Soviet mediation in the hope of entering into peace talks with the United States to resolve the issue of the South.

2. Le Duan Advocated Peace Talks with the United States

Like the line he had formulated earlier for resistance to French aggression, the line President Ho formulated now for our fight against the Americans was: "Wage a protracted and arduous struggle and fight to win." However, after U.S. planes started to bombard the North in August 1964 in a bid to force the people in the South to stop fighting, Le Duan began to seek Soviet mediation for peace talks with the United States to resolve the South Viet Nam issue. In the meantime, he spread among the masses his views that were opposed to President Ho's: "The struggle may be protracted and arduous, but we must try to win a decisive victory in a short period of time so as to resolve the issue." When asked what he meant by "decisive victory" and "the issue", Le Duan just hummed and hawed, being dead set on seeking an opportunity to talk with the United States. At a time when the war was at a stalemate, that is, when our side had not yet gained the upper hand and our opponent had not yet been landed in an utterly passive position, our negotiations with the United States would only result in dividing Viet Nam into two parts, the North and the South. Although such a result would have been favourable to us—let's say, our side would get Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces, and even the entire Fifth Joint Defence Zone, and the U.S. side would have only Nam Ky under its control—Viet Nam would still remain divided, which would be tantamount to our recognition of American rule over Nam Ky. That was why Le Duan couldn't answer the questions.

On January 30, the Campaign of 1968 started. The Liberation Army of South Viet Nam attacked and captured more than 40 big, medium and small cities and towns, including Saigon and Hue. In Saigon, the Liberation Army occupied the Independent Palace, the Broadcasting Station, the Police Headquarters, Tan Son Nhat Airport, the headquarters of the puppet troops as well as the third floor of the American Embassy. In Hue, the army captured the whole city. The flag of the National Liberation Front of the South was flying over the Imperial Palace, government office buildings and the streets for a month. The relative strength of ourselves and the enemy being what it was at the time, the enemy would not take his defeat lying down. In disregard of the people's lives and their property, the U.S. forces and their puppet troops launched violent counter-attacks on places occupied by our army. Our army had to withdraw, suffering heavy losses of men and weapons.

Having been reassured that the Liberation Army would not be able to capture all South Viet Nam, the enemy went on with his mopping-up operations, while letting it be known that he wanted to engage in peace negotiations with the Liberation Army in an attempt to put the latter off guard and weaken its will to fight.

On March 31, 1968, two months after the 1968 Campaign, American President L. B. Johnson declared that the bombing of North Viet Nam should be limited to the north of the 20th parallel (to the north of Nghe An Province), and he officially proposed negotiation with Hanoi. On April 3 the same year, Le Duan issued a statement himself that a Vietnamese delegation would be sent to negotiate with the United States. When Premier Zhou Enlai heard this news, he went to President Ho, who was recuperating in Beijing, to talk with him about the matter. It turned out that President Ho was totally unaware of Le Duan's statement.

Before making decisions on a matter of such importance Le Duan should have gone to Beijing to report to President Ho and exchange views with the Chinese comrades. It was nothing

accidental that he hastily decided to answer L. B. Johnson as he had done. As early as in 1964, when the U.S. air forces began bombing the North, Le Duan and some others attempted to have negotiations with the United States. But they were afraid that President Ho would not agree. To convince him, Le Duan cited the Chinese experience of "fighting while holding negotiations". President Ho agreed that he had got a point there but said that if you failed to win on the battlefield, there was no way the issue could be settled at the negotiation table. He pointed out that we should mainly rely on armed struggle, although we should also express our readiness in holding negotiations; in any case, these matters should be discussed carefully with the Chinese comrades. President Ho's clear-cut views embraced both strategic principle and flexible tactics, and he attached great importance to the exchange of views with the Chinese comrades. However, Le Duan deliberately overstepped his authority, making President Ho a figurehead, avoiding discussion with the Chinese comrades, and taking it on his own to give a reply to Johnson in the hope of making it a *fait accompli* for President Ho.

Some people did not believe that Le Duan could have dared to make such a decision without President Ho's approval.

Now let us review a statement President Ho made on the subject which was carried in *Nhan Dan* on July 17, 1966. One paragraph read:

> Let me make it clear to Johnson and his cohorts: although they can dispatch 500,000, 1,000,000 or even more troops to escalate the war in South Viet Nam and use hundreds of planes to continue their bombing of North Viet Nam, they cannot weaken the iron will of the heroic Vietnamese people in their resistance to American aggression to save their country. The crueler they are, the graver their crimes. **The war can continue another five, ten or twenty years or even longer! Hanoi, Hai Phong and other cities or enterprises may be destroyed, but the Vietnamese people will remain undaunted.**

Let us look at the letter President Ho wrote on February 15 of the same year in response to Johnson's proposal to "send reliable representatives to have direct talks and seek a peaceful solution":

> If the U.S. government really wants to have dialogues, it must first of all unconditionally stop bombing and all other military acts against the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. **Otherwise, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam will not enter into dialogues with the United States to discuss questions of concern to both sides. The Vietnamese people will not yield to armed force nor be coerced into dialogues under the threat of bombs**.

President Ho's statement and letter were resolute in their intention to awake Le Duan from his dream of resolving the South Viet Nam issue through peace talks. Nevertheless, Le Duan still cherished his dream and when Johnson proposed to negotiate with Viet Nam, he promptly accepted the proposal without first consulting with President Ho. It became a *fait accompli* when Le Duan hurriedly sent people to have talks with the United States in Paris. Here we might as well have a look at how the Paris talks proceeded.

On May 13, 1968 started the first round of talks between Viet Nam and the United States at the Paris International Conference Centre. The Vietnamese side demanded that the United States stop bombing the North while the U.S. side demanded that both sides de-escalate the war; in other words, the U.S. demanded that the army and people in the South stop fighting too. The talks on this issue lasted more than five months until November 1 when Johnson declared that the U.S. would completely stop its bombing of the North. This made it possible for the two sides to discuss possibilities of talks attended by four parties, including the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South. Viet Nam and the Nguyen Van Thieu regime. The talks got sidetracked on minor issues like the shape of the table to be used—rectangle, square,

rhomboid or round. Consensus of opinion on such issues was reached after almost three months' discussion.

It was on January 18, 1969 that representatives from the four sides sat down together at a round table, reaching an agreement to have a meeting each week. But sometimes no meeting was convened because the U.S. and the puppet regime had no intention to solve any issue at the table, trying to win a decisive victory on the battlefield. So the talks dragged on and on for nearly two years without making any progress up to the 92nd meeting held on November 19, 1970.

On November 21, 1970, the U.S. renewed its bombing of Hai Phong, Quang Ninh, Ha Tay, Hoa Binh, Quang Binh, Ha Tinh and other places. Under such circumstances, the Vietnamese side should have asked to suspend the talks in order to encourage the army and the people in the South to carry on the armed struggle, but Le Duan advocated continued talks. Nothing came of its 148th meeting.

On March 30, 1972, the army and people in the South launched a smashing attack on Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Tay Nguyen, the Fifth Joint Defence Zone and the southern part of the South.

On April 6 of the same year, U.S. air and naval forces bombarded various places of the North.

Harbouring no illusions, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam issued orders on April 11, 1972 that the army and the people assault the enemy-occupied areas to liberate their homeland. And in October, they captured 30,000 enemy troops, destroyed four key strongpoints of the puppet special forces, and raided and destroyed six airports and a hundred fortifications. (See *Nhan Dan*, December 2, 1972.)

In late December 1972, the U.S. air force once again bombed Hanoi, Hai Phong, Vinh Phu, Ha Bac, Thai Binh, Nghe An and other places, only to suffer heavy losses. More than 80 planes were shot down, including 34 B-52's and five F-111's. Consequently, at the 175th meeting—the last meeting of the Paris peace talks—held on January 23, 1973, Henry A. Kissin-

ger agreed to initial with Le Duc Tho "The Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet Nam", which was officially signed on January 27 by the foreign ministers from the four sides.

It can be seen that during the five-year period from May 13, 1968 to January 27, 1973, the four intensive U.S. bombings did not scare the courageous Vietnamese army and people, and the struggle for peace rose here and there among the American people and army and the people in other parts of the world. The heroic struggle carried out by the Vietnamese army and people and the international appeals to stop the war in Viet Nam forced the White House to consider a "glorious withdrawal".

Obviously, the Paris Agreement had been signed due to the following four factors:

1. The Vietnamese army and people, particularly those fighting in the South, had great faith in the correct line laid out by President Ho. They would rather die than live as slaves and had persevered in fighting despite the hardships they had to endure and the sacrifices they had to make.

2. The U.S. troops suffered heavy losses and were roundly beaten on the battlefield. According to available statistics, 58,000 U.S. troops died and 300,000 were wounded. This was a much understated figure. Anyway those who died in the Viet Nam war had swelled the wallets of American arms dealers.

3. The American people and troops and the people in other parts of the world waged struggle demanding that the United States end the war in Viet Nam.

4. Pinned down by the Viet Nam war, the U.S. was less in a position to contend for hegemony with the Soviet Union. In some areas of science and technology, the Soviet Union had caught up with the United States; in some other areas, it had surpassed it.

There was absolutely no need for Le Duan to dispatch in a hurry such a big delegation for negotiations with the United States in Paris. He had done so because he had made an incorrect analysis of the situation and had been impetuous in

his action. If the manpower and material resources consumed in the five years in Paris had been used to increase the fighting capacity of the army in the South and to take measures against U.S. bombing, the United States would eventually come around to the negotiation table, withdraw all its troops from Viet Nam and sign "the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet Nam". In this way, the length of the peace talks perhaps would have been shortened, just as the Geneva talks had, which only lasted two months.

In short, as President Ho had put it, the success we achieved of the Paris peace talks was due to the victories we won on the battlefield; not due to the "brilliant, strategic conciliation" as claimed by Le Duan himself, still less due to Le Duc Tho's wagging of his tongue.

Of course, from what they had done, we can say that Le Duc Tho, like other people who attended the Paris talks, had made contributions. Through the talks they had made it known how courageous the Vietnamese people were in the war and how hard-working and resourceful the Vietnamese cadres were at the negotiation table.

III. Liberation of the South, Reunification of the Fatherland and Le Duan's Role in These Two Events

After President Ho passed away in September 1969, Le Duan took the leadership into his hands. On April 30, 1975, the South was liberated. This might lead people to attribute the final victory in our people's war to resist American aggression and save the nation to the wise leadership of Le Duan. It's no wonder some of his followers have praised him to the skies. The December 1984 issue of *Cong San* (*Communism*) carried an article entitled "A Dark Page in American Military Annals", alleging that "in the acute, fierce and protracted trials of strength with the American imperialists, the Vietnamese army

and people, under the unparalleled, brilliant strategic and tactical guidance of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party headed by General Secretary Le Duan, have written a most glorious page in the 2,000 years of Vietnamese military annals". This article lavished praise on Le Duan without mentioning President Ho's guiding line and principles, the heroic fighting spirit of the army and people, and the collective wisdom that had helped rectify Le Duan's mistakes in time. This only goes to show how ignorant the writers hired for this article are. To make things clear, I think it is necessary to bring up the following points:

1. mistakes made by Le Duan after the signing of the Paris Agreement;
2. reactions in the South Bureau of the Central Committee and among the cadres in the South;
3. new prospects brought about by the Tay Nguyen Campaign; and
4. liberation of the South, reunification of the Fatherland and Le Duan's role.

1. Mistakes Made by Le Duan After the Signing of the Paris Agreement

In the course of our people's war to resist American imperialism and save the nation, Le Duan had made some mistakes. For instance, during the 1968 Campaign he made a wrong assessment of the relative strength of the enemy and ourselves and he was impetuous in deciding to hold negotiations with the United States in Paris, as I have mentioned earlier. But here I am going to discuss the liberation of the South, reunification of the Fatherland and Le Duan's role.

As we know, the Americans and the puppet regime never honoured the Paris Agreement. They conducted mopping-up and "nibbling" operations in an attempt to wipe out the liberation army and revolutionaries in the South. Instead of waging armed struggle under such circumstances, Le Duan held that we should only engage in political struggle and pursue a policy of encouraging desertions within the puppet army so as to effect reconciliation with the enemy. This proposal, based on

his wishful thinking, did not conform to reality.

Even Tran Van Tra, who had followed the example of Le Duan and spoke ill of China, had to tell the truth about this matter in his memoirs: "To implement the instruction of the higher authorities of striving for complete realization of the Paris Agreement, some cadres and local authorities, fearing that they might violate the Agreement by fighting back against the enemy, adopted an ineffective, dangerous Rightist approach when carrying out the policy of encouraging desertions within the enemy troops. They forbade five things: **launching attacks on the enemy, launching attacks against the enemy troops sent out on mopping-up and "nibbling" operations, encircling enemy strongholds, shelling strongholds of the puppet troops, and building combat hamlets.** They believed that only by doing so could they stabilize the situation, avert tension and achieve national unity. In some areas, they withdrew the troops from the front line for reorganization and consolidation in the belief that our troops would otherwise be wiped out by the enemy. In fact, the withdrawal only made it easier for the enemy to seize more and more of our areas, crush our mass following, destroy our party organizations. In the end, there was no more armed struggle against the enemy." (*Hoi Ky Tran Van Tra*, Vietnamese ed., Hanoi, 1982, p. 54.)

Tran added, "The Paris Agreement did not mean the end of the struggle between revolution and counter-revolution, nor was the armed struggle ended in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement. As mentioned above, the enemy had already violated the Agreement by 'nibbling' away our areas in an attempt to keep only the puppet regime and army in existence. And we on our part wished to have two distinctly different areas to exist at the same time—the enemy's and ours—so that principles as appropriate for struggle in each area might be applied in order to stabilize the situation, strengthen our weakened armed forces and build up our economic zones and political power. This was sheer wishful thinking. (*Hoi Ky Tran Van Tra*, Vietnamese ed., Hanoi, 1982, p.70.)

Soon after the Paris Agreement was signed, the enemy took advantage of Le Duan's ill-conceived proposal, having its

troops capturing bit by bit some of our key areas, such as Cua Viet in Quang Tri, the Bay Nui area in Long Xuyen, the No. 4 Highway in My Tho, the No. 2 Highway in Ba Ria and Sa Huynh in Quang Ngai. Particularly in the South, the enemy seized all the places in provinces under our military areas. In Saigon, the enemy used bulldozers in residential areas to level houses and gardens to the ground, built up strategic hamlets, established more strongholds and sent special agents to round up and kill many of our cadres at the grass-roots level. Meanwhile, the enemy troops flocked to the areas where the two sides had been locked in stalemate, launching large-scale mopping-up operations, putting those areas under their control and building up new strongholds. Nearly 300 strongholds were built in My Tho, Go Cong, Kien Tuong and Ben Tre alone. At the same time, the enemy strengthened the puppet regime from top to bottom, and set up many military sub-areas, tightened his control over the people and stepped up his efforts to arrest revolutionaries in the South.

2. Reactions in the South Bureau of the Central Committee and Among the Cadres in the South

"Foreseeing this critical situation in which the people in the South might find themselves, the South Bureau of the Central Committee and the local military commission objected to the withdrawal of troops from the front line. They ordered the troops to be reorganized and consolidated where they were with a view to keeping on the armed struggle in the three areas. Meanwhile, they reported their views to the Central Committee." (*Hoi Ky Tran Van Tra*, Vietnamese ed., Hanoi, 1982, p.68.)

According to *Hoi Ky Tran Van Tra*, neither cadres nor soldiers in the South were pleased with Le Duan's proposal. They declared, "Not that we want to satisfy our own wish to continue the fight, but that we hope there will be peace in our Fatherland and our people will no longer live in misery. When the enemy troops are conducting mopping-up and 'nibbling' operations, aiming their guns at us and attempting to rob us of the fruits of victory we have just gained in revolution, what

shall we do? Shall we just stand there, shouting 'Long Live Peace'? No! We shall have no more of the senseless, tragic events that occurred during the 1954-1959 period. We still feel painful at our hearts when we recall that many comrades fell down because they were not allowed to shoot the enemy and that the revolutionary movements in many places were stamped out in cold blood. In My Tho, our guerrillas, fearing that they might be criticized for having incorrectly implemented the policy of encouraging desertions within the puppet army, had to organize secret (behind the back of their superiors) attacks on the strongholds illegally set up by the enemy within our base areas. In face of the enemy's 'nibbling' operations, our armed forces in Mo Cay and Ben Tre, being forbidden to launch any counter-attacks, had to withdraw from one place to another. The comrades sighed, 'There is no place for us to go now except underground!' When in the end they had to launch counter-attacks on their own, they recovered all the lost base areas in the counties." (*Hoi Ky Tran Van Tra*, Vietnamese ed., Hanoi, 1982, p. 83.)

Contrary to what Le Duan had advocated, the army and people in the South were determined to retaliate against the enemy's unlawful "nibbling" operations. The South Bureau of the Central Committee, together with millions of civilians and tens of thousands of soldiers in the Liberation Army and with the local armed forces, the militia and guerrillas, fought the enemy day and night to seize every inch of land and every village and to win over every villager they could. As a result, they won numerous victories: they smashed many enemy mopping-up operations, destroyed the strongholds set up illegally by the enemy in our base areas and re-established control over almost all the territory occupied illegally by the enemy, thus forcing the enemy troops to retreat to the areas they had held before January 28, 1973, the day on which the Paris Agreement became effective.

Through their heroic operations, the army and people in the South crushed the plot of American imperialism and the puppet regime to wipe out our revolutionary forces, and so the Political Bureau of the Central Committee had to make a new

appraisal of the balance of strength between the enemy and ourselves. At the enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau held on December 18, 1974 and attended by representatives from the battlefields in the South, the strategic task for 1975-1976 was discussed. Le Duc Tho said, "Ever since the signing of the Paris Agreement, we have overestimated the strength of the enemy and underestimated that of ours.... Practice has shown that we are stronger than the enemy."

Nevertheless, the Headquarters of the General Staff still stipulated in their specific plans that in 1975 we could only fight small battles rather than large-scale ones. In doing so, we would be able to foil the enemy's attempt to appease the people and accumulate our strength to fight large-scale battles and win a decisive victory in 1976. It was not until the Liberation Army had captured Phuoc Long that the Political Bureau made up its mind to launch the Ban Me Thuot Campaign and sent Van Tien Dung south with the mission of relaying the Political Bureau's instructions to the commanders on the Tay Nguyen battlefield and organizing the units of the Liberation Army in the South (including the main forces in Tay Nguyen and those of the Fifth Joint Defence Zone as well as local troops) to fight in co-operation with the 316th Division and several reinforced regiments directly under the General Headquarters.

3. New Prospects Brought About by the Tay Nguyen Campaign

After a period of preparation, our army started to assault Ban Me Thuot at dawn of March 10, 1975. Under our surprise attack, most of the puppet troops fled into the jungle the following day, and Ban Me Thuot was liberated.

This great victory scared Nguyen Van Thieu, who on March 14, 1975 ordered all the puppet troops to withdraw from Tay Nguyen.

As the Ban Me Thuot Campaign was going on, the armed forces of the Tri Thien Military Area also encircled and attacked the enemy there. They destroyed or forced the enemy to abandon many strongholds, demolished the enemy's ware-

houses and cut off his vital communications lines.

On March 19 our army attacked and liberated Quang Tri.

On March 21 it attacked Hue, which was liberated on March 25.

On March 24 and 25 it liberated Tam Ky and Tuan Duong. The local armed forces in Quang Ngai engaged the enemy there and liberated the whole province.

After our army had won one victory after another, the Political Bureau held a meeting on March 25, at which it recognized that the occupation of Ban Me Thuot had raised the curtain on the Tay Nguyen Campaign, turning the military situation to our favour—we had more favourable conditions than we had had at any other time before for liberating the South. It was decided also at this meeting to transfer Van Tien Dung from Tay Nguyen to the South to join Pham Hung and Tran Van Tra in directing the Saigon-Gia Dinh Campaign.

On March 25 our troops attacked Da Nang, where most of the puppet soldiers, as was the case in Hue, had no will to fight and fled helter-skelter. Many commanders left their fighting posts and tried to escape south with their families. By then, those enemy units that had not yet been attacked by our troops fell into disarray.

So, on March 28 Ngo Quang Truong, Commander of the puppet First Army and the First Tactical Zone, ordered on his troops to withdraw from Da Nang in accordance with Nguyen Van Thieu's instructions.

On March 29 the whole city of Da Nang was liberated.

With the fall in rapid succession of Tay Nguyen, Hue and Da Nang and especially the crumbling of the Phan Rang-Xuan Loc defence line, the puppet regime was confronted with the danger of imminent military and political collapse. In early April, seizing this strategic opportunity, the Political Bureau instructed the Military Commission to order the armies and military command in different areas to take emergency action and get ready as soon as possible to launch a general offensive against the enemy in Saigon.

On April 14 the Political Bureau accepted the proposal of

the Central Military Commission to rename the Saigon-Gia Dinh Campaign the Ho Chi Minh Campaign.

Before the Ho Chi Minh Campaign started, the army and the people in the South had made thorough preparations for the Campaign. The main forces of the local troops launched successive attacks on the enemy and liberated vast areas forming an encirclement around Saigon. This made it possible for the main forces from the Headquarters to arrive at the assembly area secretly.

At midnight on April 28 various units of our army started a general offensive against the main targets in Saigon.

In co-operation with our assault on Saigon, local Party committees and revolutionary mass organizations sprang into action, leading the people in armed struggle, persuading puppet soldiers to lay down their arms, seizing political power from the puppet regime, making sure that construction projects and factories were intact before they were turned over to the revolutionary government, and maintaining public order. Meanwhile, college and middle school students in Saigon also took effective steps to prevent sabotage by the enemy and enthusiastically acted as guides when our troops were ready to make a frontal assault or were garrisoned in government offices.

At 11:30 a.m. on April 30 our army hoisted a red flag on top of the Independence Palace, and the historic Ho Chi Minh Campaign was crowned with victory.

On that day red flags with gold stars and blue-red flags of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam could be seen fluttering everywhere in Saigon. Countless residents came out to welcome the Liberation Army. Life there went on unchanged, factories and enterprises kept on running, and water and electricity supplies for the city's inhabitants were ample.

On that day, not only in Saigon but also in all other parts of the country, people, whether in the cities or in outlying villages, greeted the news of victory with excitement, and they could be heard singing everywhere:

We celebrate the great victory,
As if Uncle Ho were with us.
This victory is the crystallization of his teachings.
Viet Nam—Ho Chi Minh.
Viet Nam—Ho Chi Minh.

4. Liberation of the South, Reunification of the Fatherland and Le Duan's Role

While celebrating our victory, we looked back on the road our people had traversed over the past decades. It was a road overgrown with brambles and lashed by storms mingled with the tears and blood of our people who had fought courageously and endured untold hardships. It was a most glorious road, along which numerous compatriots and comrades had laid down their lives for the independence and freedom of our Fatherland. The mountains and rivers of our country were crimson with their blood. It is they to whom we owe this victory.

As to the fundamental cause for the victory of April 30 and the victory in our effort to resist U.S. aggression and save the nation, we had to make an objective, genuine and adequate appraisal by proceeding from the revolutionary stand. Reminded of the proverb "Drinking water, one should never forget those who dug the well", we could not lose sight of President Ho's guiding line, the collective wisdom of the Political Bureau and of the entire Party membership, or the contributions made by the whole army and people. Nor could we forget the tremendous assistance offered by the fraternal countries, and particularly by our Chinese, Laotian and Cambodian friends who had been fighting in the same trenches with us. On no account should we give credit for the collective contributions and sacrifices made by our nation and our friends to Le Duan himself.

If the army and people in the South had rigidly adhered to Le Duan's decisions after the signing of the Paris Agreement, if the leadership and our army and people who were doing the practical fighting had not rectified the mistakes he

had made in time, there was no telling what crisis would have occurred in the South and what the outcome of our people's struggle to resist U.S. aggression and save the nation would have been.

Facts have proved that we owe the brilliant victory of April 30, 1975 and the complete liberation and reunification of our country to President Ho's guiding ideology and the heroic, indomitable spirit of the army and the people.

Glory will always belong to President Ho and the Labour Party of Viet Nam, to the Vietnamese army and people, and particularly to the heroic army and people of the South.

However, when giving credit to the correct line laid down by President Ho, to the collective leadership of the Political Bureau and the Central Committee of the Party and to the arduous efforts made by the Vietnamese people, and by the army and people in the South in particular, we must not forget the contributions made by people as individuals. It follows that we should also make a correct appraisal of Le Duan. He joined the revolutionary ranks many years before and has made his contributions to the revolution. It is true that he made various mistakes during the course of the revolution, but they were unavoidable, because new things keep cropping up in the process of the revolution and nobody should be expected to fully understand them promptly. One has to learn new things while performing one's work, constantly analyse experience in the light of the realities of different places at different stages of history, make criticism and self-criticism earnestly, and cultivate one's revolutionary qualities in order to prevent corruption and backsliding. Of course, not everybody can come up to these standards.

We regard the mistakes Le Duan made before nationwide liberation as mistakes made by a revolutionary, a member among the ranks of the people.

But in the post-liberation days, Le Duan has completely deviated from President Ho's guiding line and the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, undermining the achievements gained by the people, who had endured untold hardships and made

countless sacrifices in the struggle over the past century, and turning our heroic Viet Nam into a country which is committing aggression against other countries, creating tension and antagonism with our neighbours for generations to come. At the same time, he has made Viet Nam a military base for a foreign country, endangering peace in our own country, in Southeast Asia and in other parts of the world.

All mistakes made by Le Duan after liberation are no longer mistakes made by a revolutionary but, instead, mistakes of an entirely different nature—a betrayal to our revolution, our nation and our Fatherland.

IV. The Vietnamese Revolution and Le Duan's Betrayal

As President Ho had stated, the aim of the struggle to resist U.S. aggression and save the nation was to make Viet Nam a peaceful, united, independent, democratic, prosperous and powerful country. After Viet Nam won victory in the struggle, Le Duan did exactly the opposite. In order to achieve his counter-revolutionary objectives, he schemed to make Viet Nam the hegemonic overlord of Indo-China and Southeast Asia.

Le Duan knew full well that China would take vigorous action against his schemes. Determined to carry out his objectives and check China's moves against him, Le Duan racked his brains for all sorts of tricks and pursued a course of action that had extremely perilous consequences.

1. He convened the Fourth National Party Congress at the end of 1976 in order to oust those who disagreed with him.

2. He forced the Central Committee to adopt anti-China resolutions.

3. He sent troops to invade and occupy Kampuchea after concluding the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation Between Viet Nam and the Soviet Union.

1. Convening the Fourth National Party Congress at the End of 1976

According to the Party Constitution, the National Congress of the Party is held once every four years. So, the Fourth National Congress should have been convened at the end of 1964 or at the beginning of 1965. However, since the Soviet Union, still advocating peaceful coexistence between the North and the South, was reluctant to give Viet Nam military assistance, Viet Nam remained in a disadvantageous position internationally. It was not until February 1965 when the Soviet Union agreed to offer Viet Nam military assistance to resist U.S. aggression that the domestic and international situation became very favourable for making preparations for the Fourth National Party Congress. Yet, because Le Duan was preoccupied with his plans to negotiate with the United States and the Party's political line had not yet been determined, there were no guidelines by which to draft a political report to the Party Congress. Besides, for years President Ho had been struggling with illness. Although he had urged Le Duan to convene the Party Congress, his efforts were in vain because the latter kept postponing the Congress using the excuse that there wasn't enough time to make preparations. After President Ho died in September 1969, Le Duan, with full power in his hands, was able to postpone convening the Congress till the liberation of the South. Once the South was liberated, he believed that there was no more need for him to worry about reaching a compromise with the U.S., that his plans to occupy Cambodia and gain control over Laos would definitely be successful, that Chinese military assistance was no longer necessary and that there was no need for him to be afraid of dampening the people's enthusiasm for the war of resistance to U.S. aggression—a war that had already come to an end, if he ganged up with his followers to get rid of his chief rivals. He claimed that he deserved all credit for the victory won by the Vietnamese people in the war of resistance at the cost of many lives and prided himself on it. He decided to convene the National Congress of the Party at the end of 1976.

While preparations for the Congress were under way in November 1976, Le Duan proposed to the Political Bureau that I head the Party delegation to attend the Seventh National Congress of the Albanian Party of Labour. I was quite aware that Le Duan's intention was to take advantage of my absence to gang up with his trusted followers to oust his political opponents from the Party leadership and form a new leading body that would adhere to their reactionary line and principles. Nevertheless, I expressed my willingness to accept the mission. So, I wouldn't be involved in the discussion of personnel appointments. Anyway, Le Duan and company would elbow me out of the central leading bodies, or at least out of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee.

On December 1, 1976, the preparatory conference of the Fourth National Party Congress opened. As it happened, Cuba was to convene the First Session of its National Assembly of People's Power and invited a Vietnamese National Assembly Delegation to attend it. Le Duan again schemed to have me lead the delegation, but he did it in a roundabout way. He appointed Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thap, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, head of the delegation. At the same time, he sent Xuan Thuy to tell me in private that Cuba might not be happy with that, but there was no other suitable person because everybody was busy with preparations for the Fourth Congress. Being aware of their trick, I said to Xuan Thuy that if the Party deemed it necessary for me to go, I would be glad to do it even if I had to be absent from the preparatory conference. It was common practice among Communist Parties to hold a preparatory conference to discuss ideological problems and personnel appointments before submitting the results to the Party Congress. It was mainly for the purpose of avoiding discussing personnel appointments that I accepted the mission of heading the delegation to Cuba. As I had anticipated, on December 7 when I returned to Hanoi from Cuba, the preparatory conference ended on that very day. As soon as Le Duc Tho met me, he explained why I had not been nominated as a candidate to the Central Committee. I was

not surprised and certainly not irritated, because I knew that with Le Duan in control of things, I could not function in my capacity as a member of the Central Committee, indeed as many others could not either. For many years after President Ho's health had gone from bad to worse, the Central Committee itself, even when it was in session, had failed to function as the Party's supreme organ of collective leadership.

I still remember a political event that occurred in 1967. A number of students and cadres, who had just returned from the Soviet Union after finishing their studies there, rigged up an anti-Party organization. When this was exposed, they got arrested. In their confessions they gave the names of many people, including Nguyen Van Vinh, lieutenant general of the People's Army and Chairman of the Reunification Committee of the National Assembly. Nguyen secretly provided foreigners with military and political information, which was a grave crime indeed. Generally, serious cases like this one were reported to the Political Bureau and submitted to the Central Committee for judgement. At that time, President Ho was still in good health. Yet, on the pretext that the case was still under investigation, Le Duc Tho reported only occasionally to the Political Bureau how the investigation was going. Soon after President Ho passed away, Le Duc Tho suggested to the Political Bureau that a three-men investigation group be formed with himself serving as head of the group and Tran Quoc Hoan and Nguyen Luong Bang as members. Actually, it was Le and Tran who were in charge of the actual handling of the case and Nguyen had to obey them in everything. From then on, Le Duc Tho never made any report on the case to the Political Bureau unless he was asked to when the Central Committee was in session. Not until 1976 when the Central Committee was in session did Le Duc Tho propose that the Central Committee take disciplinary action against Nguyen Van Vinh by lowering his rank from lieutenant general to major general and demoting him from the post of government minister to the post of vice-minister. The proposal was turned

down unanimously by the participants; it was decided to expel Nguyen Van Vinh from the Party, strip him of his military rank and dismiss him from his post as Chairman of the Reunification Committee of the National Assembly. Le Duc Tho, Director of the Central Committee's Organization Department, was entrusted with the execution of the decision. At the session of the Central Committee, Le Duc Tho had to accept the decision, but in private he told Nguyen Van Vinh that he could still enjoy freedom despite of the decision and persuaded him to take it easy and wait for an annulment of the decision. At the Fourth National Party Congress a new Central Committee was elected and Le Duan gained full control over organizational matters. At a session of the Central Committee held in 1977, Le Duc Tho proposed a re-examination of Nguyen Van Vinh's case. This was followed by a decision to dismiss Nguyen Van Vinh from his post as Chairman of the Reunification Committee of the National Assembly and demote him from lieutenant general to major general. According to organizational principles, only the new Central Committee has the right to annul decisions made by the previous Central Committee. Why was the case shelved for 10 years before a decision could be made in 1977? Because Nguyen Van Vinh knew the inside story of Comrade Nguyen Chi Thanh's murder. If Nguyen Van Vinh had been punished according to the Party discipline and the law, he would have revealed all the details about the murder, the true nature of Le Duan and company would have been fully exposed and their crimes made known to the Party and the people.

I still remember another event that happened at a session of the Central Committee in 1968 (with President Ho absent for health reasons). When problems related to the struggle against U.S. aggression were discussed, Comrade Nguyen Tho Chan, alternate member to the Central Committee and Ambassador to the Soviet Union, stated that Viet Nam should mainly depend on China for assistance in the current war of resistance rather than on the Soviet Union which, although providing us

with aid too, was very afraid of the United States. He was cut short by Pham Van Dong who, seated on the rostrum, made a long speech, alleging that it was China that was really afraid of the U.S. No sooner had Nguyen resumed his statement than Pham cut in again. Nguyen was kept standing at the platform listening to Pham's lecturing, for the latter was member of the Political Bureau and Chairman of the Council of Ministers. After Pham Van Dong finished speaking, Nguyen picked up where he had left off, citing examples to indicate how the Soviet Union feared the U.S. But he was cut short once again and had to leave the platform to take his seat.

In 1970, when the Central Committee met again to discuss the struggle against U.S. aggression, Comrade Pham Van Xo, member of the Central Committee, stressed the need to have a good grasp of what President Ho had said regarding the arduous, protracted nature of the struggle. Like Nguyen Tho Chan, he was interrupted three times and couldn't finish what he had to say.

At a session of the Central Committee convened in 1973 after the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from the South, a number of army commanders who had participated in the 1968 Campaign commented on the Campaign, saying that because the Campaign had been dragged on for too long, we had suffered enormous losses, the Party's grass-roots organizations in the rural and urban areas had been ruinously destroyed and, for this reason, had not yet been revitalized. Some of the commanders solemnly read the speeches they had prepared beforehand and then handed the speeches to the Presidium lest their speeches should be distorted. The issue they raised at the session was one of great significance, but the Presidium, which included members of the Political Bureau, instead of presenting it for further discussion at the session, just ignored it. The members of the Central Committee looked at each other in bewilderment, and the presiding chairman called for a shift of the discussion to other topics.

Bearing in mind the above facts, I was able to compose

myself and made no response when Le Duc Tho informed me that I had not been nominated as a candidate to the Central Committee. Nonetheless, I expressed my desire to make a speech at the Fourth Congress of the Party. Le Duc Tho rejected my request outright, saying that it was already too late to make arrangements for that because the speakers at the Congress had already been decided on and because there were many others who had expressed the same desire to speak at the Party Congress.

One-third of the members of the previous Central Committee were excluded from the new one elected at the Fourth National Congress. The Central Committee elected at the Third National Congress consisted of 71 members, while the new Central Committee consisted of 133 members, of whom 101 were full members and 32 alternate members. Most of the new members followed Le Duan in opposing China. The rest of them were not in favour of this anti-China orientation; they were not on bad terms with Le Duan either, they just remained silent, not daring to openly express their views.

After the Fourth National Congress, Party congresses at provincial and county levels were convened one after another. The Central Organization Department, which was under the charge of Le Duc Tho, sent representatives to those congresses. According to an oral directive from this Department (no written instructions being available), no one above the age of 55 was to be elected to the provincial Party committee and no one above the age of 50 was to be elected to the county Party committee, with the exception of those specially approved by the Central Committee (in fact, by the Central Organization Department).

In this way, large numbers of people who were not in favour of Le Duan were excluded from both central and local leading bodies of the Party. By taking these organizational measures, Le Duan and his ilk had basically laid the ground for their adventurist schemes.

Long before the Fourth National Congress of the Party was convened at the end of 1976, I had anticipated what would

happen at and after the Congress. During the Tet of 1976, I wrote a poem to express my thoughts and determination:

At the age of seventy-one I'm not too old
to concern myself with state affairs.
With discerning eyes I can tell good people from bad,
With an unfailing ear I can hear everything far and near.
Under the guidance of Uncle Ho,
I'm determined to do my utmost.
Having wholeheartedly served the country for fifty years,
I have yet to work harder and make new contributions.

2. Forcing the Central Committee to Adopt Anti-China Resolutions

As one can see from what has been mentioned above, Le Duan's anti-China views go back to an early date, though they have been manifested in different ways at different times. From 1957 to 1960 when he had not yet usurped Party leadership, he engaged in a lot of double-dealing, saying a few nice things about China and even criticizing those people who had underestimated the contributions performed by the Chinese advisers.

For a certain period after being elected First Secretary of the Central Committee at the end of 1960, Le Duan adroitly concealed his anti-China views, although accidentally he would let out some of them.

In the years after 1965 when the Soviet Union was giving Viet Nam military assistance and President Ho was in poor health, Le Duan's anti-China views, reflecting those of Khrushchov's, were being widely disseminated among his followers.

Although in the "cultural revolution" years when the ultra-Left policies pursued by the Gang of Four brought serious havoc to China, China continued to offer assistance to Viet Nam in fighting the U.S. aggressors. For example, Premier Zhou Enlai made it clear that no Red Guards in Beijing were allowed to criticize and denounce Fang Yi and Li Qiang, who were charged with paramount responsibilities of carrying out China's programme of assistance to Viet Nam. He also forbade

the Red Guards in Wuhan to intercept trains that were carrying ammunition and other supplies to Viet Nam. Although Le Duan knew all this, he claimed that China's "cultural revolution" was having a harmful impact on Viet Nam's war efforts. He went so far as to make trouble against China. He had the Overseas Chinese Federation in Hanoi reorganized, replacing its chairman, a man of moral integrity who had made contributions to the Vietnamese revolution, with a reactionary overseas Chinese who had been against the Chinese revolution. When attending meetings held by the Fatherland Front, this reactionary fellow would always make a speech slandering the Chinese Communist Party. Le Duan also ordered that the Chinese-language newspaper *Xin Yue Hua* (*New Viet Nam and China*), which was run by the Overseas Chinese Federation, be closed. Regarding all these provocations as lying within the sphere of Viet Nam's own internal affairs, China did nothing in response. Le Duan was carried away by wild joy, erroneously believing that China was weak and easy to bully.

When all of South Viet Nam was liberated following the withdrawal of U.S. troops, Le Duan became increasingly flagrant and unscrupulous in his anti-China activities.

A stunning example of this was when China proposed having a Chinese consulate general be established in Saigon, Le Duan turned down the proposal on the grounds that there were no overseas Chinese in Viet Nam but only Vietnamese of Chinese origin, whereas there were three Vietnamese consulate generals in Chinese cities—Kunming, Nanning and Guangzhou.

Another example is the crack-down on Chinese "comprador bourgeoisie". Under the pretext of imposing sanctions upon comprador bourgeoisie, Le Duan was actually attacking the overseas Chinese in Viet Nam who made an honest living and even those who had rendered service to the Vietnamese revolution. At the same time, a number of Chinese nationals were forced to move to new economic zones and were allowed only to take their personal luggage along with them, leaving their immovable property behind. In the uninhabited and poverty-

stricken economic zones, they received no help whatsoever. In despair, some of them returned to their homes, only to find that their houses had been looted lock, stock and barrel. As they could not apply for permanent permit, they were denied food-rationing coupons. Many had to sleep in the streets, being frequently driven away and verbally attacked. Those who had no alternative but to stay in the economic zones lived in misery, suffering from disease, hunger and cold.

Still another glaring example of Le Duan's provocative acts against China was his expulsion of 270,000 Chinese residents, who were forced to return to China. He also had 100,000 put on boats and set out at sea to drift where they might. Although they were expelled in different ways, they suffered the same misfortune, that is, they were all robbed of their property on the grounds that since they had come to Viet Nam penniless, they had to leave penniless.

Le Duan went farther, making opposition to China one of the cornerstones of Viet Nam's national policy as well as the general line of the Vietnamese Communist Party. With respect to the national policy, Le Duan through Truong Chinh forced the Constitution Drafting Committee to write into the new constitution that the Vietnamese people "shall have a trial of strength with the Chinese expansionists, hegemonists and their lackeys in Kampuchea".

With respect to the Party's general line, Le Duan had the Central Committee adopt an anti-China resolution in 1978. In the resolution it was stated that China was the immediate deadly enemy of the Vietnamese people; that it was imperative to overthrow the reactionary pro-Mao leadership clique in Beijing; that it was essential to help the progressive forces in China come to power; that it was necessary to criticize Mao Zedong Thought in every field of endeavour; and that it was necessary to persuade all countries in Southeast Asia to oppose China.

After the anti-China resolution was adopted, Khrushchov's anti-China views, which in the past had been dissemi-

nated secretly, were now circulated throughout the Party. Wang Ming's counter-revolutionary works had been printed in small numbers and circulated among a few cadres close to Le Duan, and now over 100,000 copies were printed and all the cadres at the provincial level and above were required to study them. Who was Wang Ming? Why did his works find favour in Le Duan's eyes? Wang Ming was a person opposed to Mao Zedong Thought. At times he had revealed his "Left" deviationist thinking, advocating the seizure of state power by taking the cities first. When Chiang Kai-shek deployed more than 100,000 troops to attack the Soviet Area in Jiangxi Province, he insisted on fighting positional warfare and abandoning not an inch of land. Sometimes he was Right-deviationist in his thinking, advocating the policy of "everything through the united front" when the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party were co-operating in their resistance to Japan. Wang's "Left" and Right mistakes led to the collapse of 90 per cent of the Party organizations in the cities and put the Red Army in Jiangxi Province in a very dangerous position. Having to abandon the Soviet Area, the Red Army went through the arduous Long March that lasted more than twelve months. In the end, it arrived in northern Shaanxi after having suffered enormous losses.

To implement the anti-China resolution, Pham Van Dong visited the Southeast Asian countries, where he slandered China, and pledged not to assist the Communist Parties there, by which he meant, in fact, sabotaging these Parties. Le Duan and his followers had the representatives of the Central Committees of these Parties, who were in charge of liaison work in Hanoi with the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party, expelled from Viet Nam. The most absurd thing they did was to dupe the Thai Communist Party comrades stationed in Hanoi into going to Vientiane to discuss work there. After their arrival, they were left there and were told that there was no need for them to go back to Hanoi. These comrades could not make a living there and had to leave for Thailand at a time when the Thai authorities were trying to

ferret out Communists. Furthermore, Le Duan and company urged Nai Bunzen, a traitor to Thailand, to form a so-called New Party, which was renamed the "Northeast Party" later. Their scheme was to separate from Thailand the 16 northeastern prefectures to establish an independent state. Bunzen often went to conduct activities there with some other fellows. After he was arrested, he confessed that he had acted under orders of Le Duan. It was obvious that Le Duan was going against the Marxist-Leninist principle that "revolution cannot be exported" and against the internationally acknowledged principles of peaceful coexistence, one of which being "no interference in other countries' internal affairs", betraying a fraternal party and scheming to overthrow the government of a neighbouring country.

To carry out his anti-China resolution, Le Duan and company continued to persecute the Chinese and drive them out of Viet Nam. They plundered their property, and removed cadres of Chinese origin from their posts in the Party and state organs and in the army, including those who had been acclaimed as heroes for having fought valiantly against the Americans, been model workers or made contributions in the war and in the reconstruction of Viet Nam after the war. Worse still, they separated Vietnamese families in which either the husband or wife was of Chinese origin. No matter whether they had children or not, the Vietnamese had to divorce the Chinese. Otherwise, they both had to move to the new economic zone or leave Viet Nam. Le Duan and company even forbade the inhabitants along the Viet Nam-China border to have contacts and barter with each other or to visit their relatives according to the agreement reached between the two Parties in the past. The Vietnamese troops dug trenches, planted bamboo stakes, laid mines along the border, and carried out military provocations, shooting civilians working in the fields or walking along the road on the Chinese side.

At the same time, they conducted a large-scale purge within the Party and government, expelling those who stood for maintaining good-neighbour relations with China as well as

those who had frequently spoken of China's contributions in the wars against France and the United States.

3. Sending Troops to Invade and Occupy Kampuchea After Concluding the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation Between Viet Nam and the Soviet Union

Le Duan had forced the Central Committee to adopt the anti-China resolution and perpetrated the evil-doings mentioned above—all for the purpose of showing the Soviet Union his determination in opposing China and his role in sabotaging those fraternal Parties which disapproved of the anti-China position of the Soviet Union. In so doing, Le Duan naturally won the favour and approval of the Soviet leaders.

On November 3, 1978, Le Duan and Pham Van Dong went to the Soviet Union themselves to sign the Vietnamese-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation, which in essence was a military alliance. One article of the Treaty stipulated, "When either side is attacked or is under the threat of attack, the two signatories shall immediately conduct meetings to work out ways of stamping out the threat and take appropriate, effective measures to guarantee the peace and security of the two countries." Obviously, the aim of this article was not to have Le Duan guarantee the security of the Soviet Union, but to have the Soviet Union guarantee Le Duan's security in opposing China as well as withstanding possible Chinese military retaliation.

On December 25, 1978, after signing the Treaty, Le Duan dispatched 200,000 troops to attack Kampuchea. On January 7, 1979 they occupied Phnom Penh, and Le Duan rigged up the Heng Samrin puppet regime on January 10 of the same year, declaring the establishment of the so-called People's Republic of Kampuchea for the purpose of "legitimizing" his aggression.

Le Duan's plan was to launch a blitzkrieg attack with a superior force to wipe out all resistance forces and swallow up the whole of Kampuchea in a few weeks' time. However, more than seven years have elapsed since January 1979 and the

Vietnamese troops are still bogged down deeply in the "quagmire" of Kampuchea. More and more young Vietnamese soldiers have to serve there as "cannon-fodder". In Viet Nam agriculture is on the decline, industry is at a standstill, and the Vietnamese people are suffering hunger, disease and death, leading a life without freedom or democracy. In the international arena, Viet Nam is extremely isolated. Seven resolutions have been adopted in recent years by the United Nations General Assembly demanding the withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. However, Le Duan has refused to accept the resolutions. Instead, he has dispatched troops to harass Thailand, threatening that country's security.

Le Duan has always claimed that the leaders of Kampuchea pursued a policy of genocide, when in fact it is Le Duan and company who have committed genocide in Kampuchea. Everywhere their troops go, they set things afire, destroy things and even kill Kampucheans. According to Kampuchean sources, Le Duan and his followers have settled 600,000 Vietnamese in Kampuchea. Meanwhile, they have compelled the Heng Samrin puppet clique to provide the Vietnamese immigrants with land and housing so that these immigrants, together with the Vietnamese troops, can exercise military, political and economic control over Kampuchea. They have forced Kampuchean women to marry Vietnamese and have had the Vietnamese language taught in schools in Kampuchea in an attempt to assimilate the Kampucheans. All this was designed to realize their fond dream of establishing a "Federation of Indo-China" with Viet Nam as overlord.

Thus, Le Duan has completely revealed his true features of "deceiving his teacher and betraying his friends". His "internationalism and special alliance with Kampuchea and Laos" are sham through and through.

4. The Consequences of Le Duan's Betrayal

With his betrayal, Le Duan has destroyed all the excellent qualities of a Marxist-Leninist political party, the fruits of the revolution, the bright prospects of our Fatherland, and the

contributions made by the Vietnamese people to the revolutionary cause of the people all over the world. The consequences of Le Duan's betrayal can be summarized as follows:

1) *In the Party*. The Vietnamese Communist Party founded and nurtured by President Ho is a party which serves the people wholeheartedly. But today this party, under Le Duan, has by and large been turned into an organization controlled by Le Duan and his cohorts. They shield each other and ride roughshod over the Vietnamese people. There is no freedom or democracy within the Party, and nobody dares to say what he really thinks about major national or social issues. Anyone who is bold enough to make any criticism will face retaliation or frame-up, no matter how high a post he occupies. Being First Secretary of the Party, Le Duan shows little respect for the Constitution, the law and the National Assembly, the united front and the mass organizations which were established after the revolution. He has practised fascist "Party rule", running counter to the principles governing a Marxist-Leninist party. Through the mass media, he has played up his self-alleged loyalty to the line set by President Ho and to Marxism-Leninism. He has also boasted of being devoted to building socialism and of being committed to fulfilling proletarian internationalist obligations in Kampuchea and Laos. This is an out-and-out lie which can deceive nobody.

2) *In internal affairs*. Since Le Duan pursues a policy of aggression and war, all human and material resources have been squandered in fighting wars and in making preparations for wars. Our sons have had to sacrifice their lives on the battlefield. As a result, our industry, agriculture and commerce have fallen into stagnation and the living standard of the people is now among the lowest of any in the world. Social evils such as graft and corruption, back-door dealings, speculation and profiteering, burglary, gambling, prostitution, beggary and superstition are to be found everywhere. In this kind of "socialist society", a new landlord stratum has emerged in the rural areas, foremen in factories and enterprises, bureaucrats in government offices, and warlords in the military.

The abolition of the system of self-government in areas where minority nationality people inhabit has sparked resistance among the people there, which has provided the opportunity for reactionaries to attempt to sabotage the unity of our country.

To build new economic zones was itself a good idea. But Le Duan and company have used it as a means of punishing people whom they dislike, both Vietnamese and Chinese. This has caused an enormous waste of manpower and financial resources and aroused bitter resentment among all those people who have been compelled to move to the new economic zones.

The policy towards the South has also posed one of the major problem areas of Viet Nam's domestic policy. As we still remember, when the news came in the years between 1964 and 1968 that Le Duan and company intended to reach a compromise with the United States, the cadres in the South declared that they would "rather die than join forces with the North". This was an expression of their uncompromising hostility towards the U.S. and its puppets and of their steadfast determination to liberate the South and reunify the Fatherland. After the complete liberation of the South, Le Duan and company took credit for all the successes scored in the war. They even tried mechanically to impose on the South the model of the North, which was not at all suited to actual conditions in the South. On the one hand, they assigned cadres from the North key positions in all departments, discriminating against quite a few cadres from the South and patriots who had taken part in the war of resistance, including members of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam. These shaky practices provoked a strong reaction from the cadres and masses in the South.

3) *In foreign affairs.* Le Duan and company have done their utmost to fabricate and distort history by writing anti-China passages into the Constitution and into the resolution of the Central Committee and by launching an anti-China movement throughout the Party and across the country. This is not only an act of ingratitude but also one of stupidity. It will

inevitably cause generation after generation of antagonisms between the Vietnamese and Chinese people. Of late, Le Duan and company have often professed that they want to have a rapprochement with China. But how could that come about if they refuse to take out those anti-China passages in the Constitution and the resolution of the Central Committee and to withdraw Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea?

They have sent hundreds of thousands of troops to Kampuchea to loot and burn everything and kill people in an attempt to perpetuate their control of that country. Although the people of Kampuchea have suffered from such treacherous, counter-revolutionary act, they will never yield. This will be a deep source of trouble for Viet Nam.

Aided and abetted by the Soviet Union, Le Duan and company are pursuing a policy of seeking hegemony in Indo-China and Southeast Asia. In the process, Viet Nam will become increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union economically, politically, militarily and in its relations with other countries. And in the end, they will have to sell out the national interests and turn Viet Nam into a military base of the Soviet Union.

Le Duan and company have boasted that Viet Nam is the third military power in the world. They have encroached upon the territory of Thailand, an action which no politically minded person would bring himself to perpetrate.

Their stupid behaviour has placed Viet Nam in an antagonistic position with its neighbours and strained its relations with other Asian countries. Moreover, the people all over the world no longer place any trust in or respect Viet Nam's foreign policy; almost all countries in the world have stopped giving moral or material support to Viet Nam. Hence Viet Nam has found itself isolated in the world arena.

Le Duan's betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution has brought about extremely serious, far-reaching consequences to the country. Even if Le Duan, with a twinge of conscience, were willing to return to the side of the Vietnamese people and

heal the wounds he has inflicted on the people's minds and on society as a whole and try to make up for the damages his policies have been directly responsible for, it would take several decades for him to succeed. However, up till now we have seen no indications whatsoever of an intention on Le Duan's part to return to the people's side. Therefore, the only way out for the Vietnamese people today is to unite and struggle to overthrow the brutal and corrupt Le Duan regime. There is no other alternative.

V. My Determination to Leave the Fatherland and Continue the Revolution

It is really rare for one who has dedicated most of his life to a revolutionary cause to leave his Fatherland in his old age after the revolution has been victorious. But there was no other alternative for me under the circumstances in which Le Duan had betrayed the revolution, formed his own faction, set up a fascist dictatorship in Viet Nam, and established a close-knit network of security agents both inside and outside the Party to stifle the opinions of those who are concerned about the interests of the Fatherland and to prevent people from making contributions to the revolutionary cause.

Feeling a deep sense of responsibility, I could not sit idly by and watch the revolutionary cause be ruined, the people suffer, the Fatherland be brought to the verge of abyss and the unity of the socialist camp and of the international communist movement be undermined by Le Duan and his cohorts. I expressed my deep-felt sympathy for the suffering people, supported those cadres who criticized Le Duan's mistakes and pointed out the root of all the social evils that had cropped up. I tried to have innocent people who had been framed by Le Duan vindicated—though I was not in a position to eradicate the root-cause of all the problems, that is, to have those who had abused their powers to frame other people punished, because these people were shielded by Le Duan and company.

It was precisely for this reason that Le Duan and company looked upon me as "a thorn in their flesh". They isolated me from other people and had their lackeys and agents spread brazen rumours that I was under surveillance by the public security organ, with the end result that some cadres became suspicious of me and reluctant to have contact with me. Furthermore, they tried every means to lower my prestige. At the ceremony to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Party, they arranged no seat for me on the rostrum. When I, in my capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, received ambassadors from other countries, they did not allow these activities of mine to be reported in the newspapers. On some grand occasions when I was seated on the rostrum or when I received distinguished foreign guests, they would direct the photographer to leave me out of the photographs (I don't want to name the photographer here, who was paid for doing this by the Propaganda Department of the Le Duan's Central Committee).

In addition, they sent special agents to tail those who entered or left my residence or that of my wife and children. They even ordered my guards, doctors and nurses to watch my moves. My office, my parlour and the hospital ward were all bugged. At the same time, my sympathizers advised me in private to be careful. I was not afraid of them because what I did and said were revolutionary to the core. Whatever they learned by whatever means would only prove all the more conclusively that I was a revolutionary. Nevertheless, under the circumstances I still tried my best to help the revolution and the people.

It was not until Le Duan forced the Central Committee to adopt an anti-China resolution and outrageously invaded Kampuchea that I realized there was little I could do to benefit the people and the revolution if I stayed in Viet Nam. So, on my way to East Germany for medical treatment, I managed to escape Le Duan's sinister grip and came to China to continue my revolutionary career.

Before leaving for East Germany, I stayed in the 108th Hospital in Hanoi for more than two months. During that period, my temperature was over 37°C everyday. I suspected that I had cancer, but after group consultations the doctors said that they had only found a dark area in my lung and were debating whether it was pulmonary tuberculosis. They suggested to the Central Committee that I go to East Germany to get a more definite diagnosis and receive medical treatment, which in any case would be better than what I could get at home. On my way to East Germany, I decided to go to China, instead.

A few days after my arrival in China, I was sent to the 301st Hospital for an examination, which proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the dark area in my lung found by the doctors in Hanoi was in fact a big tumour 6 cm long and 5 cm wide. After a month of radiotherapy and taking traditional Chinese medicine (which included bear gall bladder, musk and rhinoceros horn), the tumour contracted to a size of 5 cm long and 4 cm wide. After the completion of radiotherapy, I was discharged from hospital for further clinical treatment while the doctors reviewed the results of my radiotherapy and discussed plans for further treatment.

As soon as I learned that I had lung cancer, I made up my mind to have it removed by surgery. But the doctors did another examination and made a review of my state of health to see if I could undergo a major operation. To diagnose my condition, the Chinese Communist Party invited three medical experts from Japan: the President of the Tumour Hospital of Japan, an expert on lung cancer and an expert on lung surgery. After arriving in Beijing, the Japanese experts joined the Chinese doctors in working out a plan of treatment. They all believed that it was necessary to remove that part of the lung which contained the tumour. I was only too happy with this diagnosis and also very confident of the success of the operation. The Japanese experts returned to Japan after the consultation, and the President of the 301st Hospital was placed in charge of my operation. During the operation, all the experts concerned were present to work with him.

On September 5, 1979, I lay unconscious on the operating table for a full four hours. When I came to, the doctors told me that it had been a successful operation. After two weeks of meticulous care, my cut healed and the stitches on the thoracodorsalis cut were taken out. As there was no longer any need for me to stay in the hospital, arrangements were made for me to live in a separate residence and to continue to receive treatment. Two doctors and four nurses, in shifts, took good care of me. A few months later I went to hospital for a follow-up examination. The symptoms of cancer had all disappeared. I was delighted beyond measure. To express my gratitude, I wrote a poem in Chinese and dedicated it to the Chinese medical staff:

Falling deadly ill for more than twelve months,
In the Divine Land I was lucky to find capable Chinese doctors.
Having my illness cured once and for all,
I'll devote my remaining years to composing fighting songs.

It must be pointed out that although I came to China to continue my revolutionary career, I still intended to wage my struggle against Le Duan through organization channels. I had thought of writing a letter in which I would point out the current mistakes made by Le Duan in various fields and suggest corrective measures and then having the letter transmitted home through the Vietnamese Embassy in China. But to my regret, I was deprived of the chance to write it. Within a few days after my arrival in China, Radio Hanoi reported news of "my treason". I was stripped of my position as deputy to the National Assembly; I was also relieved of my position as Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly and member of the Presidium of the Fatherland Front. Meanwhile, it was decided that I be tried by default in court on charges of treason.

Therefore, I had to hold a press conference in Beijing, at which I read my "Message to All Vietnamese Compatriots"

and explained why I had had to leave my Fatherland. (See the "Relevant Documents" below.)

Twenty days later Le Duan and company adopted a resolution expelling me from the Party, whereupon I made a statement laying bear Le Duan's sinister ambition to seize leadership of the Party and his betrayal of the people's interests. (See the "Relevant Documents" below.)

Some ten months later, on June 26, 1980, Le Duan had the court try me by default. They sentenced me to death and confiscated all my property. What of a death sentence? Here I am still alive and kicking and busy with the struggle against them. As to my property, there were only a few winter clothes which I had left behind in Viet Nam that summer and some revolutionary books, and gifts and picture albums presented to me by the friendly countries which I had visited as head of Party and Government delegations or of National Assembly delegations.

On July 10, 1980 I gave an interview, which was later carried by China's *People's Daily* and in which I commented on this trial. (See the "Relevant Documents" below.)

I came to China not merely to evade Le Duan's persecution but chiefly to continue my revolutionary work. I wanted to expose Le Duan's betrayal and enunciate to the people the need of uniting together to overthrow Le Duan's cruel, corrupt rule and turn Viet Nam into an independent, neutral and nonaligned country that maintains peaceful, friendly relations with its neighbours, a country where democracy is practised and national unity prevails and where people have enough to eat and wear and live in a healthy social environment. In fact, these were exactly the goals set by President Ho which I spelled out as the four major suggestions and twenty measures contained in my message to all Vietnamese compatriots on the occasion of the Tet of 1983.

To achieve the aims mentioned above, I have, together with many other Vietnamese patriots, published the *Tin Viet Nam* (*Viet Nam Information*). This monthly has carried many related articles on this subject and has been circulated widely

both at home and abroad. The following articles I penned appeared in the *Tin Viet Nam*:

—"Message to All Vietnamese Compatriots" (August 9, 1979)

—"Statement Regarding My Expulsion from the Party by Le Duan (September 1, 1979)

—"The Comradeship-in-Arms Between Viet Nam and China Brooks No Distortion" (November 1979)

—"Viet Nam Needs Another Revolution" (January 28, 1980)

—"Fight to Renew and Enhance the Friendship Between Viet Nam and China" (the 1st issue, March 1981)

—"Comments on the New Constitution of Viet Nam" (serialized in the first four issues of March, April, May and June 1981)

—"Statement on Le Duan's Tampering with President Ho's Testament" (the 7th issue, September 1981)

—"The Historic Task Facing the Vietnamese People Now Is to Renew and Enhance the Friendship Between Viet Nam and China" (special issue, May 19, 1982)

—"*The Selected Works of Ho Chi Minh* and Renegade Le Duan" (the 21st, November 1982)

—"Message to All Vietnamese Compatriots on the Occasion of the Tet of 1983" (the 24th issue, February 1983)

—"An Open Letter to Laotian Friends" (the 34th issue, December 1983)

—"The Geneva Agreement of 1954 and Reunification of Our Fatherland" (the 41st issue, July 1984)

Ever since I left my Fatherland I have been working to build a peaceful, united, independent, democratic, prosperous and powerful Viet Nam, as envisaged by President Ho. It is my hope that Le Duan, who has abandoned this vision, will have the courage to correct his mistakes so as to extricate our country and people from the present misfortunes. If he persists in his current course, the Vietnamese people will continue in their struggle against him. And the day will assuredly come

when his mistakes will be repudiated, the line and principles laid down by President Ho will be carried out and the friendship between Viet Nam and China will be renewed and cemented.

Internationally, I hope the Soviet leaders will modify their unrealistic policies, making them conform to the interests of the Soviet people and the demands of the revolutionary people of the world. I hope that the rifts that have occurred in the relations among the socialist countries and in the international communist movement will heal on the basis of Marxist-Leninist principles and of the Moscow Declaration of 1957 (adopted at the Conference of the Communist Parties of socialist countries) and the Moscow Statement of 1960 (issued by the Conference of the Communist and Workers' Parties of the world).

As for the future of the world, I am convinced that socialism full of vitality will eventually replace the decaying capitalism. This is an inevitable historical trend, just as in the past when the slave-owning system was replaced by the feudal system and the feudal system replaced by the capitalist system.

It is understandable that occasionally socialist countries fail to co-operate harmoniously and that certain strategies they adopt for building socialism fail to conform to the realities. This is because any system after coming into existence has to go through its own "childhood", staggering and even tumbling down sometimes. But it will pick itself up from where it falls and continue to advance.

I would like to advise those people who are disheartened at a time when the revolution is at a low ebb to keep a cool head and be convinced that the high tide of the revolution will come eventually. Those who are hostile to the revolution, gloat over its setbacks and are brazenly bent on doing away with the socialist system and communism are muddle-headed dreamers. It is my firm belief that socialism and communism will ultimately be materialized in all parts of the world.

VI. Relevant Documents

The following are three relevant documents:

1. Message to all Vietnamese compatriots.
2. Statement regarding my expulsion from the Party by Le Duan.
3. An interview with the Chinese correspondent of the *People's Daily*—on Le Duan's ordering the court to try me by default and sentence me to death.

1. Message to All Vietnamese Compatriots

August 9, 1979

My dear compatriots,

Recently Le Duan and company have directed some people to make a hullabaloo about my leaving the country. This has led to much speculation around the world. You must be concerned about this, too. Here I should like to say a few words to you.

After more than 30 years of arduous struggle, our people finally won complete victory in the War of Liberation of our Fatherland in 1975. Our people have yearned to lead a tranquil life, build up the country and pave the way for a better future. But the fruits of the revolution and the prospects for a bright future have been completely destroyed by Le Duan and company, and the hopes of the people have been crushed. Le Duan and company have reduced our people to slaves once again leading a life of destitution, a life of unprecedented humiliation and repression, with no democracy and freedom at all. What Le Duan and company have been doing has nothing to do with socialism, even if they style themselves socialists.

Turning black into white and treating friends as enemies, they have created disturbances on our southwestern border and invaded and occupied Kampuchea; they have also created

disturbances on our northern border and mobilized tens of millions of our people in preparation for a war against China; and they have sent tens of thousands of troops into Laos to suppress the Laotian people and bring the whole of Laos under their control. As is known to all, Kampuchea, China and Laos are our neighbours whose people once fought shoulder to shoulder with us in our war of resistance against French and American aggression to save our nation, shedding their blood and laying down their lives.

In fact, under the rule of Le Duan and company, the Viet Nam of today is no longer an independent country but one which has become dependent on a foreign power economically, politically, militarily and diplomatically. If this state of affairs is allowed to continue, it will not be long before Viet Nam becomes a source of raw materials, a processing factory and a military base for a foreign power.

Under these circumstances, I, as a revolutionary, cannot remain silent. Devoted to the revolution, I have tried every means to break away from the control of Le Duan and his cohorts and continue my revolutionary work. Ever since the 1920s I have followed Uncle Ho in fighting for national independence. I ardently love my country and my people. But as Le Duan and company were acting arbitrarily and persecuting revolutionaries, I was unable to stay in Viet Nam to work for the people any longer and had to leave my country in a state of grief and indignation. Although advanced in years and poor in health, I will do my utmost for the common revolutionary cause of the people of Viet Nam and of the world as long as I am alive.

I anticipated that after my departure Le Duan and his cohorts would level one charge or another against me and even sentence me to death on charges of high treason. But as a revolutionary, I have nothing to fear as long as what I do will benefit our country and our people.

There is much more I want to say to you, but, owing to my poor health, I will stop here.

Let me avail myself of this opportunity to extend my best

regards and cordial greetings to all my compatriots both at home and abroad!

Hoang Van Hoan

2. Statement Regarding My Expulsion from the Party by Le Duan

September 1, 1979

The Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party under the control of Le Duan has recently decided to expel me from the Party. Regarding this matter, I wish to make the following statement:

The Vietnamese Communist Party which was founded and nurtured by President Ho is a great Party. Over the decades, the people of our country, under the leadership of the Party, have fought dauntlessly and heroically and succeeded in completely liberating their land from the yoke of imperialism and feudalism and turning Viet Nam into an independent, democratic country, thereby making its contributions to the revolutionary cause of all the people of the world. This is something the Vietnamese Communists can be proud of.

Unfortunately, after 1965 President Ho's health began to deteriorate. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Le Duan has resorted to conspiratorial means to gradually usurp the leadership of the Party. After the death of President Ho, Le Duan and his cohorts have gained complete control of the Party. They have used every conceivable means to place their kinsfolk and sworn followers in key positions. In addition, they have made a decision that representatives of the public security organ sit on Party committees at all levels in order to supervise the Party committees, keep tabs on those who do not belong to the Le Duan clique and persecute them on trumped-up charges. Le Duan and his followers have thus thrown over-

board the principle of inner-Party democracy. Party members dare not speak their minds about state affairs or issues concerning the Party. Even the Central Committee and the Political Bureau have ceased to function as organs of collective leadership. Arbitrariness and high-handedness, flattery and sycophancy, graft and corruption as well as bullying and fleecing of the people prevail throughout the Party, from the central departments down to organizations at provincial, district and village levels.

In his political report delivered at the Fourth National Party Congress in 1976, Le Duan gave himself all the credit for the splendid victories won by the people in the wars of resistance in which they had made great sacrifices. He proclaimed himself the wisest of Marxists and indoctrinated the cadres and masses with chauvinism.

In relation to the line our nation should follow in the new stage of our socialist revolution, he merely put forward some formulas devoid of substance, such as the dictatorship of the proletariat, people as masters in collectives, and large-scale socialist production. At the same time he hid from Party members the truth about the distinctions between the socialist revolution and the revolution for national liberation, about the main force we should rely on in socialist revolution, and about the ways of carrying out the socialist revolution.

In his analysis of the international situation, he likewise produced only empty phrases such as "the three mighty torrents of revolution", while keeping Party members ignorant of the split within the international communist movement and the socialist camp, the struggles going on among the various forces in the national independence movement, and the changes that have taken place in the line and principles now espoused for workers' movements in the capitalist countries.

With regard to the five-year plans, he listed a host of favourable conditions, while whitewashing the mistakes in the economic guidelines he and his followers have made. At the same time, he blew his own horn and deceived the people by citing unreliable, inflated figures.

At the same Party Congress, Le Duan and company had one-third of the members of the previous Party Central Committee replaced by their cohorts. They even included on the new Central Committee some people whose political backgrounds are dubious and whom President Ho at the Third Party Congress had been opposed to their being elected to the Committee.

Since the Fourth Party Congress Le Duan has made himself the overlord of the Party. He and his followers, riding roughshod over the Party and the people, have ignored the will of the people and the principles of a genuine Marxist-Leninist Party and done many terrible things, some of which even defy imagination. In spite of all this, I have kept to the stand of a Communist, waging struggles against Le Duan and his ilk while doing what I have been able to to serve the revolution and the people.

However, in 1978 a number of events occurred successively which put the future of our nation at stake. In July of that year, Le Duan forced the Fourth Plenary Session of the Fourth Central Committee to adopt a resolution venomously attacking China for harbouring intentions to "annex" Viet Nam. The Central Committee declared that China was Viet Nam's immediate enemy. Furthermore, it stated that it would undertake to overthrow "Mao's followers, the reactionaries, in Beijing" and to help the "progressive forces" (i.e., anti-Maoist forces) come to power. It instructed propaganda and education departments to make a thorough criticism of "Maoist Thought" and sent people abroad to try to persuade the Southeast Asian countries to join Viet Nam in its anti-China campaign. This shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that under the disguise of opposing Chinese "aggression", Le Duan and his cohorts cherished the wild ambitions to subvert the Chinese leadership. To attain this treacherous goal which is, in truth, quite beyond their reach, they have had to turn to an external force for support. They have concluded with a foreign power a treaty which, in essence, is a treaty of military alliance, so as to be able to carry out their adventuristic activities and menace their neighbours. Hardly

was the ink on the treaty dry when they dispatched troops to invade Kampuchea.

From these facts, I have come to the conclusion that Le Duan is a careerist who has led the Party astray, derailing it from the revolutionary line, betrayed the interests of the people and endangered the future of our nation. That's why I am resolutely opposed to him.

I had in fact expected that Le Duan would expel me from the Party. This decision, which flouts the will of true Communists, cannot in the least shake my determination to continue my revolutionary career. As I have stated in the Message to All Vietnamese Compatriots dated August 9, "Although advanced in years and poor in health, I will do my utmost for the common revolutionary cause of the people of Viet Nam and of the world as long as I am alive."

It happens that my statement falls on the eve of the tenth anniversary of the death of President Ho and the 34th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. My thoughts turn to the immortal contributions made by President Ho in founding the Party and leading the revolution to victory and to the dynamic revolutionary drive of the masses in the aftermath of the August Revolution. Comparing the present with the past makes me even more worried about the future of our Fatherland. I am sure that every true Vietnamese Communist shares my concern.

All true Communists in Viet Nam! Let us unite and wage a resolute struggle together with the people to smash the fascist rule of Le Duan and company in order to save the revolution and rescue our Fatherland from the imminent peril it is exposed to!

Hoang Van Hoan

3. An Interview with the Chinese Correspondent of the *People's Daily*—on Le Duan's Ordering the Court to Try Me by Default and Sentence Me to Death

July 10, 1980

Question: We learned recently that Le Duan and company brought you to trial by default on June 26 accusing you of coming to China. Have you anything to comment on this matter?

Answer: I have long expected that Le Duan and company would put me on "trial". In my message to my Vietnamese compatriots last August, I stated: "I anticipated that after my departure Le Duan and his cohorts would level one charge or another against me and even sentence me to death on charges of high treason. But as a revolutionary, I have nothing to fear as long as what I do will benefit our country and our people."

Nonetheless, the kangaroo court of Le Duan has ruled that my coming to China means my having joined the enemy's ranks. This is despicable distortion. China is a very good friend of the Vietnamese people. For 30 long years China provided the Vietnamese people with over 20 billion U.S. dollars' worth of aid in their wars to resist French and U.S. aggression and to save the nation. During the War of Resistance Against French Aggression, China sent hundreds of cadres to Viet Nam, who offered advice and fought shoulder to shoulder with the Vietnamese people. During the War of Resistance Against U.S. Aggression, China dispatched hundreds of thousands of people to help the Vietnamese people in the reconstruction in the rear area, and thousands of them lost their lives in U.S. bombing. In my opinion, only ungrateful people will try to paint China as the enemy.

As a matter of fact, since Le Duan and company usurped the power of the Party and the state after President Ho's death, they have been pursuing a series of exceedingly reactionary domestic and foreign policies. Particularly after they forced

the Central Committee of the Party to adopt the anti-China resolution in 1978, they have thoroughly revealed their true colours as a bunch of traitors to the country and henchmen of a foreign power, who have plunged the country into untold agony. To implement their reactionary policies, they have relentlessly persecuted whoever fails to see eye to eye with them.

As a revolutionary who stands diametrically opposed to them, I was not in a position to do anything constructive if I had decided to remain in Viet Nam. The only alternative was to leave my country if I wanted to carry on the revolution. As far as I know, what I said in the past year or so has had a fairly widespread, deep impact on the Vietnamese people and armed forces. That is why Le Duan and company were so scared as to order the court to trump up this charge. But to me, these trumped-up charges mean nothing, for they were designed to bolster their own morale and to intimidate and repress those who oppose them. Now people who are against them can be found everywhere, both at home and abroad. Le Duan and company are today sitting on top of a volcano, putting up a desperate struggle. The day will come when the people will hold them accountable for all their past misdeeds and punish them.

For my part, not only do I repudiate them, I hold them in utter contempt. Their false charges and slander are nothing but rubbish. I am dedicated to the revolution now as before; I shall devote my all to the cause of building the truly peaceful, unified, independent, democratic, prosperous and powerful Viet Nam that President Ho hoped to see. I remain determined to do my best for the renewal of the comradely-and-brotherly friendship between Viet Nam and China which was fostered by President Ho but was later wilfully sabotaged by Le Duan and company.

These are my opinions on the charges framed against me by Le Duan on June 26.

Hoang Van Hoan

APPENDIX

I. CHRONOLOGY OF MY LIFE

1905 Born to a poor scholar's family in Quynh Doi Village, Quynh Luu County, Nghe An Province.

1923 Graduated from the French-Vietnamese Junior School of the county.

1924 Search for revolutionary organizations after becoming politically awakened to the need of revolution.

1926 Sent by a revolutionary organization to Guangzhou, China, to attend a political training class run by President Ho. Afterwards join the Association of Young Vietnamese Revolutionary Comrades (AYVRC) and sent back home to carry out revolutionary activities.

1928 Sent by the Trung Ky Committee of the AYVRC to Siam to engage in revolutionary activities there.

1929 Become member of the Provincial Committee of the AYVRC when it is established in Siam.

1930 Join the Siamese Communist Party and serve as member of its Provincial Committee.

1934 Elected member of the Provisional Central Committee of the Siamese Communist Party (known as Siam Committee).

1935 Go to China for medical treatment; later lose contact with the Siam Committee. With the permission of the Overseas Headquarters of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, remain in China to conduct revolutionary activities.

1936 Help establish with other Vietnamese patriots the Vietnamese Independence League (known as the Viet

Minh) in Nanjing, China.

1937 Leave Nanjing for Wuhan when Japanese troops threaten to capture Nanjing.

1938 Before the fall of Wuhan to the Japanese, travel to Changsha, Guiyang and later to Kunming, where together with other Vietnamese comrades I take part in revolutionary activities.

1939 Comrade Phung Chi Kien comes to Kunming to set up an Overseas Work Department to guide activities in China. I am one of the members of this department.

1940 President Ho comes to Kunming from Yan'an. When the German fascists occupy Paris in June, President Ho suggests we move to Guangxi in order to establish contact with the revolutionary forces at home. To this end I first go to Guilin to see Li Jishen, Director of Chiang Kai-shek's Southwest Headquarters, to begin negotiations with him. In accordance with President Ho's directives, an Overseas Office of the Viet Minh and an Association of Sino-Vietnamese Cultural Comrades are founded. With the help of Li Jishen, President Ho goes with us to Jingxi County, which borders on Viet Nam.

1941 President Ho returns to Pac Bo, and I am assigned to Longzhou, Guangxi Province, to establish a Longzhou Office of the Viet Minh. Later, I return to Jingxi to join Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, Le Thiet Hung, Cao Hong Lanh and other comrades from home in the Viet Minh-sponsored revolutionary activities.

In May I go to Pac Bo to attend the Eighth Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee. It is decided at the Session that the Viet Minh Front replace the Anti-Imperialist Front of Indo-China. I am appointed member of the Headquarters of the Viet Minh. At the end of this year, because Tran Bao, an anti-Party element, informs against us, the Viet Minh finds it increasingly difficult to carry on its activities in China. So most of the comrades return home, but I,

under orders of the Central Committee, stay behind in Jingxi to continue our work. Before long I am arrested in Pingmeng and escorted first to Zhenbian, Jingxi and then to Liuzhou where I am kept under surveillance.

1942 In Liuzhou I take charge of the organization under the Viet Minh, get in touch with the progressives in the National Rehabilitation Army and struggle against the Chinese Kuomintang and their lackeys in their attempt to create a Vietnamese puppet government which will facilitate the Chinese army's entry into Viet Nam.

In June, Zhang Fakui appoints me "translator of the Political Work Team in the Sino-Vietnamese Border Area" in Jingxi. Shortly afterwards I return home and work in Cao Bang and Lang Son to help build the Viet Bac Liberated Area.

1945 Attend the Party's national conference held in Tan Trao, at which I am elected member of the Party Central Committee. I also serve as Secretary of the Party Committee of the Viet Bac Liberated Area.

At the end of September, I am transferred to Hanoi by the Central Committee and appointed Vice-Minister of National Defence and General Political Commissar of the National Defence Army (the Liberation Army changes its name to National Defence Army at this time).

1946 The Central Committee of the Party withdraws from Hanoi, which is threatened by French military attack, I am appointed Secretary of the Party Committee of the Fourth Joint Defence Zone, representative of the Central Government and Director of the Viet Minh.

1948 Appointed special overseas representative of the Vietnamese government and representative of the Party Central Committee. My work is to give advice on and consolidate the work abroad.

1949 Appointed head of the Vietnamese Federation of Trade Unions delegation to the Asia-Australia Trade Unions Conference in Beijing.

1950 When China declares its recognition of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, President Ho decides I remain in Beijing as representative of our Party and government (later I become ambassador) and as the ambassador to Korea and Mongolia stationed in Beijing. I stay at these posts until 1957 when I am transferred back to Hanoi by the Party Central Committee.

1951 Elected again member of the Central Committee at the Second National Party Congress.

1956 Elected member of the Political Bureau at a Plenary Session of the Central Committee to discuss the question of rectifying mistakes made in the agrarian reform.

1958 At the Eighth Session of the First National Assembly, I am elected Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly and its Secretary-General. At the same time I am elected Chairman of the Law-Drafting Committee of the National Assembly. Also at this Session, a Committee for the Revision of the Constitution is elected with Ho Chi Minh as its Chairman and me as one of its members.

1960 At the First Session of the Second National Assembly, I am re-elected Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, Secretary-General, and Chairman of the Law-Drafting Committee of the National Assembly.

At the Third National Party Congress held in September, I am elected member of the Central Committee and of its Political Bureau.

1961 At the Hanoi Municipal Party Congress, I am elected Secretary of the Hanoi Municipal Party Committee. Soon afterwards, I leave this job and become Director of the International Liaison Department of the Central Committee and Chairman of the Legislation Committee of the Central Committee. Meanwhile I am in charge of the CP38 Committee for directing operations in Laos and Cambodia.

1964 At the First Session of the Third National Assembly, I am elected for the third time Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly's Standing Committee and its Secretary-General.

1971 At the First Session of the Fourth National Assembly I am once again elected Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly's Standing Committee and Chairman of its Law-Drafting Committee.

1976. At the Fourth National Party Congress, I am squeezed out of the Political Bureau and the Central Committee of the Party by Le Duan and company. However, I am elected again Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly at the First Session of the Fifth National Assembly (an Assembly set up after reunification of the country).

1979 Le Duan has openly betrayed the revolution, which makes it impossible for me to serve as a revolutionary in Viet Nam, so I leave the Fatherland to continue my revolutionary activities abroad.

1986 Continue the struggle against Le Duan's policies that have brought calamity to my country and my people.

II. MY MAJOR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND MISSIONS

1. Activities in the Name of the Vietnamese Party and Government

1954 Attend the Geneva Conference on the Indo-China issue as a member of the Vietnamese Government Delegation.

1955 Accompany President Ho on his official visits to China, Mongolia and the Soviet Union.

1957 Accompany President Ho to pay official visits to Korea, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania

and Yugoslavia.

1961 Attend the Geneva Conference on the Laos issue as a special adviser to the Vietnamese Government Delegation.

1964 Attend Cuba's National Day celebrations as head of the Party and Government Delegation.

1965 Attend as representative of the Vietnamese Labour Party and Government the funeral of Comrade Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

1972 Attend the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Russian October Revolution as a member of the Vietnamese Party and Government Delegation.

1973 Attend as a member of the Vietnamese Party and Government Delegation the funeral of Comrade Walter Ulbricht, First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

2. Activities in the Name of the Party

1958 Head a Party delegation to attend the Fifth National Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and the 13th National Congress of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party.

1959 Accompany President Ho to attend the 21st National Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

1963 Head a Party delegation to attend the 12th National Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the Eighth National Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the 12th National Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the Sixth National Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany.

1966 Head a Party delegation to attend the Fifth National Congress of the Albanian Party of Labour and the 15th National Congress of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party.

1975 Head a Party delegation to attend the 11th National Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party.

1976 Head a Party delegation to attend the Seventh National Congress of the Albanian Party of Labour.

3. Activities in the Name of the National Assembly

1965 Head a delegation to visit Korea, Mongolia, the Soviet Union and China.

1970 Head a delegation to visit Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Albania and Hungary.

1971 Head a delegation to visit Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and the Soviet Union.

1976 Head a delegation to attend the opening ceremony of the First Session of the National Assembly of Cuba.

4. Activities After Leaving the Fatherland

1979 Arriving in Beijing, I am cordially received by the comrades of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. A few days later, I send a message to all my compatriots, explaining why I left the Fatherland.

1980 Deliver a speech to Vietnamese nationals residing abroad on the necessity of carrying out another revolution in Viet Nam.

1981 Make a speech to the Vietnamese nationals residing abroad on the task of renewing and enhancing Viet Nam-China friendship, a task of historic significance to the Vietnamese people.

In March, along with other Vietnamese patriots, publish a magazine, *Tin Viet Nam*.

1982 Run two sessions of a study class for Vietnamese residing in China.

1983 During the Tet, issue a message to my fellow countrymen, calling on them to unite and overthrow the cruel, corrupt rule of Le Duan.

1985 On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the August Revolution, host a banquet to entertain the members

of the advisers and experts groups who have worked in Viet Nam before. Representatives of overseas Vietnamese and Vietnamese refugees also attend the banquet.

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——黄文欢革命回忆录
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